613 794 inflicting or witholding sickness and all types of misfortune to the lineage, and, to ward off these, was propitiated with offerings of cooked food annually and in special emergencies on the advice of the astrologer as diviner. In particular, she [842] had power to bless with fertility women of the lineage, and so was worshipped before a pre-puberty marriage rite and also at the first menstruation ceremonies of a girl.

[778] Though not jointly owned by the lineage but rather by that branch of it which inherited the gardens on which they stood, the oldest ancestral house of the lineage, from which its forbears sprang, the original ancestor shrine in this house, and the sacred snake-grove in its [48] garden, were regarded with reverence by all lineage-members and stood as symbols of their unity. These are discussed below in connection with rites relating to the property-group.

613 608 621 (3) Fission and adoption in the Lineage

Since lineages were usually groups of actual and not putative matrilineal kin, it was inevitable that (since the birthrate is not uniform throughout a population) while some might remain stable in numbers over generations, others would expand greatly, and others would decrease and become in danger of extinction. When great growth in numbers in a lineage took place, some segments appear even traditionally to have hived off to other villages occupied by their own subcaste where kanam paddy lands and janmam garden lands were available. Such a segment, on moving to a new village, was adopted as retainers

1 [the dharma devi, or lineage goddess --- Analyst]

servants is set aside at the expense of the tarawad to entertain these men when they visit their wives, sometimes for two or three days at a time.

The buildings and courtyard are surrounded by a shady garden of coconut, jackfruit, cashew nut and mango trees. Chiefs and village headmen have a private bathing pool with stone steps running round it in their own garden; retainer [56] Nayars more often bathe in the large public bathing pools attached to the temples and reserved for "clean" castes of the village. Men and women bathe and swim daily in public clad in a loin-cloth, on opposite sides of the pool. Both boys and girls become excellent swimmers and divers almost as soon as they can walk.

In the southeast corner of the garden is an open space set aside as the group's cremation ground, while at another corner is a dense shrubbery devoted to the snake-gods of the group, in which small stone images of cobras are set up.

The property-group was traditionally a corporate group in other sense than those in which this term applied to the lineage. Whereas the lineage was held responsible in cases of offence against religious law (sins, or crimes against the village community), the property-group was responsible in cases of debt or theft (torts). The headman, on behalf of the group, must make restitution for such offences from the group's jointly owned funds. In addition, as representative of the group in the assembly, he must pay annual dues to the temple funds. Through its headman, the group also acted as a single legal personality in the payment of wages to its

592 so firmly excluded from participation in its ev-
786 eryday affairs. If this were so we would have
[152] evidence that the Nayars, in spite of their ex-
treme emphasis on the matrilineal line, virtual
sexual promiscuity within the caste, and mini-
mal recognition of paternity, had an Oedipus
Complex [59] which caused men to fear and pro-
pitiate the phallic representatives of their fath-
ers, and women to have fantasies about "pos-
session" by paternal phallic symbols. Unfor-
tunately snake worship is now practically ex-
tinct; I never saw it, and found present-day in-
formants able to make few associations about it.

592 If the snake-gods were, at least unconsciously,
786 collective "fathers" of the taravad, it is inter-
831 esting that they were represented in an archaic,
dream-like form as snakes (pure phallic animal
symbols) robbed of their human attributes. This
would accord with the fact that Oedipal hostility
of the father, which must have been experienced
by Nayar children since they slept, and do today,
in the mother's room till age four or five and
have opportunity to witness parental intercourse,
would be repressed before latency and leave its
mark only in unconscious phallic fantasies about
the father which could be translated into the cul-
tural idiom of beliefs about harmful snake-gods.
Such archaic representations contrast with the
less distorted ones of male forbears of the tara-
vad.

592 These latter comprise only the spirits of dead
769 karanavans of the property-group, not of men
778 who died without attaining to headship, and very
seldom of women. (5) In each house, a room

592 devoted to dead karanavans' spirits, opening off
769 the inner courtyard, contains a number of small
778 wooden stools on which the spirits are believed to come and sit. In those branches of the taravad which have remained in situ for many generations, retaining [60] an old ancestral house while collateral segments hived off into new ones (6), the ancestor shrine contains many stools, placed in order and named with the names of the karanavans going back to the first of the segment or of the lineage as a whole. In newer houses built by segments which have recently left the parent house there may be only one or two, starting with the stool of the man who built the house and was its first karanavan. (7) Offerings of cooked good, with delicacies of the kind most enjoyed by the recipient during his lifetime, are made before each stool by the living karanavan, in the presence of all members, twice annually on the new moon days of April-
592 May and October-November. The spirits of
769 dead karanavans are thought of as vindictive and
152 fearsome, ever prone to take offence against living members who fail in any of the details of ritual performances and general care of the taravad house and lands which are their duty, and to vent hostility on them out of all proportion to their offence. They are placated with fear and reverence but without affection. Their character contrasts with that of the patrilineal ancestral spirits of Tamil Brahmans, who are thought of as harmless, straving, lonely, pitiful beings who must be given food to sustain them in the life in the world of the dead. This

162 the most numerous and ancient group, claim that their church was founded by St. Thomas. The Portuguese converted some of them by force to Roman Catholicism and also made many converts from the lowest Hindu castes. Christians are concentrated chiefly in Cochin and Travancore.

113 (3) For a fuller discussion of the meaning of this ceremony see Gough, "Female Initiation Rites on the Malabar Coast", forthcoming in J.R.A.I.

(4) E. Colson and M. Gluckman, Seven Tribes of British Central Africa (1951), p. 129. [102]

787 753 (5) Occasionally the astrologer may divine that the spirit of a recent ancestress is causing sickness to women or children. An emergency propitiation of cooked food is then made to here in the ancestor-shrine.

769 778 (6) In a new house there may be no stool at all, unless the house was built some time before the partition by a man who died before it became occupied by the new property-group, and who thus becomes its first karanavan-spirit. If there are no stools the members of the group go back to their parent-house for ancestral propitiations for one or two generations.

212 (7) Nayar women like men could traditionally read and write Malayalam, and keep accounts.

796 (8) Onam is a harvest-festival in September; Vishu the New Year's Day, in March; and Tiruvadhira, a women's festival to Kama Devan, the Hindu god of passion.

113 (9) Murdock, Social Structure, 1949, p. 10.

(10) From the Book of Duarte Barbosa, (Hakluyt

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mal segment of one mother and her children within the property group. Each property group usually had a separate garden name in addition to its lineage name.

Residence Among retainer Nayars of this area a property group usually owned only one homestead and was simultaneously a dwelling group. Occasionally among retainers, however, and more commonly among chiefs and village headmen, a property group which increased in size might build two or more homesteads on its lands. If the houses were adjacent they were usually occupied indiscriminately by members and cooking was done only in one. If the homesteads were some distance apart each might be occupied by a minimal segment of the group. The kāranavan would manage the resources of the whole group but would allocate provisions separately to each household. Separate cooking would be carried on.

Spouses lived separately in their natal units, with the husband visiting the wife. We shall call this type of residence *duolocal*.

A traditional homestead of retainer or village headman's rank centered about a large main building with two stories, separate staircases for men and women, and, in the middle of the building, a small courtyard open to the sky. The house faced east, and was fronted by a spacious veranda, used normally by men of the group and their male visitors. Within, a passage led to the central courtyard, round which rooms opened off on three sides. They included an ancestor shrine; several storerooms containing clothing in boxes, metal vessels, jewelry, weapons, and paddy (unhusked rice) in large wooden chests; one or more rooms for everyday use, each with sleeping mats, a bench, wooden stools and chests, and a rope to hang clothes; and a small room occupied by women during their delivery and menstrual seclusions. A roofed cloister with pillars ran between the open courtyard and the rooms. Beyond the courtyard to the west was a long, narrow dining hall with a large kitchen behind it. Behind this lay the back veranda, normally used only by women and children. Upstairs might be four or five bedrooms in which women received their husbands. Men born into the group seldom entered these upstairs rooms and were forbidden to use the women's staircase.

Outside the house in the outer courtyard a separate building served as a granary for paddy. The upstairs of this building was often set aside for the kāranavan's use. Here he slept, was served with food by women of the house, entertained co-villagers, and kept records of the group's economic transactions. If the group was large a second separate building was often reserved to junior men for reading, en-

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had been so essential to its perpetuation, yet so firmly excluded from its everyday affairs.

Within each Nayar house one room was devoted to the spirits of dead kāranavans. It contained a number of small wooden stools on which spirits were believed to come and sit. The ancestor shrine of the lineage's oldest house contained many stools placed there in turn for the kāranavans of past generations, reaching back to the foundation of the lineage. A newer house would contain only the stools of kāranavans of that house. Offerings of cooked food were made before each stool by the living kāranavan, in the presence of all members, twice a year. The kāranavans' spirits were vindictive rather than protective. They were prone to punish the taravād with sickness or financial loss if any of its members failed in details of ritual performance, in care of the property, or in piety toward matrilineal kin. I have suggested elsewhere (Gough, 1958) that the cult of dead matrilineal forebears served as a focus for aggressive impulses which had their origin in relationships with living matrilineal elders. At the same time it united the living in fear and reverence of the dead and reaffirmed the moral laws of the taravād. It also acted as a sanction against a kāranavan's own exploitation of his juniors, since the maintenance of right relations with junior kinsmen formed part of his pious duty to his forebears.

The Splitting of Property Groups Genealogies and property documents reveal that during the nineteenth century the property groups of retainer Nayars divided at a particular point in their development. This occurred when the property group comprised two or more discrete segments descended from sisters, each segment containing an adult male capable of becoming kāranavan of his branch. For a segment to be "discrete," its founding ancestress, whether herself living or dead, must not have a mother, brothers, or mother's brothers alive. Separation before this point was not possibly because the division of property was stirpital. Individual men, the managers of property, could not separate themselves from their own mothers or sisters. A man could therefore never be a member of a different property group from that of his own mother's mother's brother, mother's brother, or brother. Division could take place only between groups headed by men from different minimal segments (parallel cousins, a man and his classificatory mother's brother, etc.), who were no longer held together by submission to a common mother's brother, grandmother, or great-uncle.

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like the cult of lineage ghosts, are non-Sanskritic. I discuss the three categories of cults in that order, and then refer briefly to modern changes in the cults.

The Cult of Lineage Ghosts

Each traditional Nāyar house contains a room devoted to lineage ghosts. Within the shrine are placed small, low stools (*pīṭhams*). On each of these it is believed that a particular ghost comes to sit on the days when offerings are made.

In property groups of the aristocratic lineages of village headmen and district chiefs, which own more land than do commoner Nāyars, family histories recorded in palm leaf documents may contain the names and achievements of twenty or more *kāranavans* extending back over two or three hundred years. In such lineages, whose property groups divide less frequently than do those of commoner Nāyars, the *kāranavans*' spirits are housed in a special building in the courtyard south of the ancestral house. Commoner Nāyars care somewhat less for their ancestry. Sometimes they have only three or four stools for their lineage ghosts and remember by name only those who died within the last hundred years or whose lives were in some way remarkable. Remarkable *kāranavans* are those who fought bravely in battles or received honor from chief or king, those who earned property on behalf of their matrilineal groups, or those who died prematurely through accident, murder, epidemic or suicide.

Regular offerings are made only to *kāranavans*, for only *kāranavans* hold legal authority and only their names tend to appear in documents which survive for posterity. On the advice of the astrologer, however, a *taravād* may, in emergency, propitiate the ghost of an ancestress or of a man who died before becoming *kāranavan*. But such ghosts are always those who died within the lifetime of living members.

The lineage ghosts are regularly propitiated[6] on the new moon days of Karkidagam (July-August) and Tulām (October-November). Food is cooked in the kitchen by women of the matrilineal household, and a large portion is placed on a plantain leaf for each of the ghosts. It includes curried meat and vegetables, fried paddy, beaten rice, fuits, and sweet puddings of various kinds. Toddy and arrack were traditionally served along with the meal. If a dead *kāranavan* is known to have enjoyed special foods during life, he receives a large portion of these foods. Occasionally, even in the past, individual Nāyars have been vegetarians. The spirits of vegetarian *kāranavans* may not be served with meat and are housed in a separate shrine. When the dishes are prepared, they are carried quickly to the shrine so that the ghosts may partake of their essence before others have tasted or smelled them. The living *kāranavan* places the leaves before the stools in the presence of men junior to him in the property group and then closes the door of the shrine. Age-rank is observed in making the offerings. For each spirit, in addition to its own leaf, is briefly offered the food later placed before the stools of spirits junior to it. Similarly, the vegetables of vegetarian ghosts are first offered to meat eaters who were senior to them, and the vegetables (but not the meat) cooked for meat eating ghosts are first offered to vegetarian ghosts who were their seniors. After a few minutes the *kāranavan* reopens the door and distributes the food, to be eaten by all members of the *taravād*. Women take no part in offering the food and may not enter the ancestral shrine on this day. They are also forbidden to enter it during menstrual and birth pollutions, and all members are forbidden entry during the fifteen days of pollution following a death.

Traditionally, at the close of offerings to the ghosts, men of the *taravād* might

the pyre toward the close of the cremation, and the disposal of the bones and ashes in a river far from the ancestral house. But among my Brahman informants in Tanjore these rites were carried out without explanation, and hostility to the dead seemed to find no conscious expression. Nāyars performed the same rites in full consciousness of fear and hostility to the ghost. Even at the end of the *dīkṣā* period when the chief mourner has deposited the ashes in a river, Nāyars believe that Bhairava and Kāla, messengers of the god of death, dog the mourner's footsteps back to his ancestral house. He is out of danger from them only after performing final offerings in the house which gather the ghost to its forebears and thus appease its wrath. Nāyars, like Brahmans, express grief at a death and engage in ceremonial weeping, although neither caste weeps with the loud vehemence characteristic of the lower polluting castes. But whereas Brahmans give full expression to grief and guilt, suppressing the hostile aspect of their ambivalence, Nāyars perform the same rites in consciousness both of grief and of hostile fear of the dead.

The traditional Nāyar rites and beliefs illustrate the common phenomenon of elements of symbolic culture being diffused from one group to another and endowed with a new emotional content and meaning in accordance with the needs of the receiving group. The Nāyars presumably adopted Brahmanical death rites centuries ago because of the prestige associated with certain distinctive customs of the highest group in the caste society. The extensive contact with Brahmans afforded to them by hypergamous marital unions gave them an unusual exposure to Sanskrit culture. But through centuries of exposure to Brahmanical custom the Nāyars retained such characteristically "low caste" features as animal sacrifice to punitive deities, religious possession, and propitiation of punitive lineage ghosts. I would argue that the Nāyars and lower castes retained these customs because the emotional dispositions engendered by their occupations and social relations—in particular, their ways of handling aggression and relationships to authorities—are different from those of Brahmans. Presumably also the Nāyars adapted the Sanskritic death rites to their own role structure and belief system, because these grew out of and served to uphold norms of relationships within the *taravād*.

The Cults of Alien Ghosts

In addition to lineage ghosts, Nāyars believe that the spirits of persons of any caste who died prematurely from epidemic, accident, murder, or suicide can bring misfortune to the living. Such ghosts, which I call alien ghosts, haunt the neighborhood where they died and are particularly malevolent. The misfortunes they inflict include many kinds of sickness; madness, female barrenness, cattle deaths, house fires, or poltergeist activities. Like lineage ghosts, most alien ghosts are called *pretams*. In Cochin, the Sanskrit word *piśāca* is sometimes used to distinguish them from lineage ghosts. In Kottayam, there is an elaborate cult of certain particularly important ghosts, which are called *teyyams* (a corruption of the Sanskrit word *deva* 'god').

In Cochin, one or more alien ghosts is sometimes attached to a Nāyar *taravād*, whose members are obliged to arrange for its regular propitiation. The ghost may be that of a person who is known to have died violently, within living memory, on the *taravād's* land. Alternatively, when a misfortune occurs in a household, the astrologer may newly discover that the ghost of some such person, long dead, is haunting the *aravād's* land. He may order a shrine to be built and propitiations to be made. Shrines

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to alien ghosts are built in the garden of the *taravād* house. They are propitiated annually or in emergency, usually with a cock sacrifice and an offering of toddy. Such alien ghosts are of a lineage other than that of the hosts and are usually of different caste. If a member of the *taravād* dies violently, his successors take care of his ghost in the course of their ancestral propitiations and do not commonly build a special shrine for it in their garden. They may fear such a ghost more than they fear the ghosts of forebears who died naturally, but they will not speak of this to outsiders. Rather, they are likely to deny to others that violent deaths have taken place in their lineage in the past, particularly if the deceased was a suicide or was executed in punishment for a crime. Such a ghost may however be regarded as a source of misfortunes by a Nāyar household of another lineage or by a household of one of the lower castes, expecially it the deceased died on its land or was in some way connected with it. It is then enshrined as an alien ghost in the garden of this house.

Most commonly, an alien ghost housed in a Nāyar garden is that of a former serf of the property group, of one of the "exterior" agricultural laboring castes of Pulayans, Parayans or Pānans. The legends of such ghosts are nowadays often forgotten, but several Nāyars told me that they are likely to be the ghosts of serfs who died after a quarrel with their masters or who were actually killed by them. The ghost is hostile to the *taravād* as a group and demands regular sacrifices if misfortune is to be averted. It is more hostile and capricious than are lineage ghosts, although it can also afford a certain vague protection to the *taravād* if it is correctly propitiated. Propitiations are made annually by a person of the ghost's own caste, often a Parayan or Pulayan of a family now serving the Nāyar property group. The propitiant's fee and the materials for the offering are provided by the *taravād*.

An alien ghost tends to be angered by persons who walk near its shrine at times other than those of propitiations. Some ghosts are angered only if people approach them round midnight or midday. At night, however, ghosts are able to wander some distance away from their shrines, so that it is possible to approach and offend them without being conscious of trespassing. In case of sickness or misfortune, the astrologer may diagnose that someone of the *taravād* has unwittingly offended the ghost and may order an emergency offering. After he has made the sacrifice, the low caste propitiant is likely to become possessed by the ghost and, while in a state of frenzy, to declare its satisfaction or to order further offerings. He may also take the opportunity to voice any grievances harbored by the *taravād's* low caste servants against its *kāranavan*.

A ghost of this kind may occasionally harm someone from outside its hosts' *taravād* who walks on their land at night. It could also harm its low caste propitiant if he failed in the correct performance of the rites. Usually, however, its attacks are confined to its hosts.

The ghost of such a hostile servant is to be distinguished from that of a servant who died heroically and voluntarily in the service of his Nāyar masters. Many Nāyar *taravāds* have legends of faithful serfs who died defending their masters' house during war, saved the lives of women and children, rescued their patrons from accidental death, or committed suicide in grief when a Nāyar patron had been killed. After death the ghosts of these servants are housed along with the *taravād's* lineage ghosts and are honored in ancestral propitiations. Nāyars point out that their heroism even makes the difference of caste irrelevant, for food is offered to them before it is offered

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754 769 564 forms of direct aggression which would be condemned by law. I am uncertain whether low caste people actually practice sorcery, but it seems very probable that they do. If they do it is also very probable that they regard their actions as forms of retaliation which are morally justifiable, although outside the framework of the law. By contrast, alien ghosts institutionally attached to the *taravād* and the village have the support of all right-minded persons and are more comparable to institutionalized secular authorities. For they are concerned with the overall maintenance of interdependent and harmonious relations between castes of the community, and their cults are a public, collective acknowledgement of the need for these relationships.

564 769 A complete analysis of alien ghost cults would, of course, require full discussion of their role in the lives of the lower castes themselves. I lack space here for such a discussion but will make one or two relevant points. In each of these lower castes there were cults of familial ghosts. These, though less elaborate than the Nāyar cult of lineage ghosts, fulfilled similar intrafamilial functions. Some lower caste households also erected one or more unhewn stones in their gardens which were believed to enshrine male or female alien ghosts or minor deities. These spirits seem to have fulfilled, for the household itself, similar functions to those of the *dharma devī* of a Nāyar *taravād*. They were propitiated by the low caste householder. Nāyars believed that a low caste man could also control such a household spirit, or some personal spirit over which he had gained individual sway, to bring harm on an enemy through sorcery. Lower caste persons certainly believed that some members of their castes possessed these powers, and it seems probable that some persons did try to employ them. Household or personal spirits could also be used by powerful owners to exorcise other harmful spirits from the bodies of high or low caste people suffering from attacks by sorcery.

The Nāyar's relationship to these lower castes was therefore one of secular authority combined with some ability to oppress them in the economic and political spheres. In addition, the Nāyar projected his aggression against them in the belief that they might harm him through witchcraft or sorcery. The lower caste man's relationship to the Nāyar was one of submission. He could not express direct aggression toward the Nāyar. He probably did, however, express aggression toward a Nāyar enemy covertly through sorcery. It is possible that a few low caste persons in addition believed themselves capable, through witchcraft, of assuming the form of an animal and bringing harm to an enemy of higher caste. It must also be mentioned that low caste persons believed others of their caste to be capable of sorcery against themselves. Witchcraft, however, seems to have been confined to relationships between low and high castes.

769 564 782 613 776 152 The lower castes of the village also owed allegiance to the Nāyar goddess Bhagavadi, who was enshrined in Cochin in the village temple, and in Kottayam in small temples attached to particular *taravāds*. The lower castes could, however, approach Bhagavad, only through the propitiation of alien ghosts attached to the *taravād* or the temple. In the context of these propitiations, the lower caste officiant's relationship to his Nāyar hosts was a complex combination of aggression, authority, cooperation, and submission. In the *teyyam* festival of a Nāyar *taravād* in Kottayam, for example, lower caste officiants must first humbly gain permission from the living Nāyar *karanavan* the Nāyar lineage ghosts and the *taravād* goddess before starting their own propitiations. In the offerings to the *teyyams* which follow, the officiant's attitude to these minor deities is ostensibly one of humility, although the actual performance of the blood sacrifices permits considerable expenditure of aggression. Later, when the officiant

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to Abibuduya, the serpent of the deep. Further, an inscription at Banavasi in Kanara in South India, records the erection of a cobra stone in the middle of the 1st century A.D.

In Chamba district the 'golden snake' is offered milk.[2] In Bengal the snake goddess Manasa is worshipped widely, and this is supposed to give protection from snake-bite. Manasa is represented by an earthen pot with vermilion marks. Among the Meithies of Manipur the snake is believed to be the manifestation of a dead ancestor and is accordingly venerated and worshipped. A cult of the snake god is found among the Khasis of Assam, which however is diminishing now-a-days. Among the Khasis a mythical snake called U Thlen is worshipped and is propitiated by the offering of human blood.[3] It is believed that the Thlen attaches itself to homes and families and is the bestower of wealth, prosperity, fame and well-being to its hosts. However, it needs regular and periodic propitiation by the offering of human blood, and in the event of its being neglected it brings disease, ill luck and ruin to the unlucky family which has angered it.

In South India and particularly among the Nayars the worship of snakes is an established cult. Snake groves or *kavus*, which are clumps of wild trees festooned with creepers, abound in plenty, usually near the homes of Malayali Hindus. These groves are called *vishathum kavu* (poison shrine) or *nagakotta* (snake shrine). Usually a block of granite is carved into the shape of a cobra's head, called *chitra kutta kalu* and is consecrated at the spot.

In Quilon district, Travancore, near Haripad is a big snake worship centre in the form of the Manarsalil temple. One of the important snake shrines is called *bernie kavu* situated in Chenganur taluk of the Quilon district. In Trivandrum is the great temple of Padmanabha Swami and here one of the important deities worshipped is Ananta, the mighty serpent, upon whose great coils Lord Vishnu reclines on the ocean of milk.[4] Further, in Tirunelveli a temple dedicted to Shankar and the goodess Gomiti called Sankaranianar Koil has a snake mound where worship is offered to serpents in the hope that chronic stomach ailments will be cured by propitiating the

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825 171 deity. Besides these, there are innumerable private snake shrines, particularly in pious households.

753 825 171 782 778 All diseases or misfortunes are due to the neglect of snakes. Leprosy, itches, sterility of women and deaths due to poison, are attributed to the anger of snake gods. The remedy for snake-bite lies in the propitiation of serpents through worship at the snake shrine. If no such shrine exists, then a diligent search is made and a 'snake stone' is dug up from the vicinity. Thereafter this accidental find of the snake stone is duly consecrated and worshipped, and all the erstwhile troubles are attributed to the inadvertent neglect of the sacred stone. The person dying of snake-bite is taboo, because his body is supposed to be occupied thereafter by the snake god, and it needs to be disposed of in a special manner with particular reverence and specific rituals.

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771 825 779 796 173 Among the Nayars of South India snake worship assumes unique importance. It is popularly believed that in early times a Pambakattu Nambutiri brahmin brought the serpents with him and left them in their present abode. He however promised to return one day but never did. Strangely enough, in Travancore, a Pambakattu Nambutiri family still resides and is not permitted to enter the Manarsalil temple for fear that the snakes might leave the area and follow the brahmin to his abode. In a special ceremony called *kavu muttam* or the shifting of the snake shrines from one place to another in the compound of the house—if accidentally the shrine is awkwardly situated in a plot of land where construction is to begin—the Pambakattu Nambutiri is called specially to do the necessary shifting ceremony. He purifies the new area and transfers the shrine to the newly consecrated spot, to the accompaniment of sacred incantations. Thereafter there is feasting and the brahmin is paid money and is presented with a set of new clothes. This is in striking coincidence with the legend of origin, and lends credence to the story of the origin of snake worship, particularly in Manarsalil temple in Quilon, as being connected with Pambakattu Nambutiri brahmins.

778 The plans of snake shrines have much in common, though some are small and some big. The Manarsalil temple

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is surrounded by a series of concentric circles as it were, on the outside is a wide road where fairs are held and much commerce goes on on festive days. The low castes cannot go beyond this outer fringe. Lodged within, is the garden where the snakes are to be seen in their natural habitat. In this area is a sacred tank, the water of which is rather dirty due to falling vegetation, but which is reputed to be medicinal in property. Here too is a very large vessel into which milk is poured by the priest so that the snakes might be well fed. Within this belt of vegetation and bushes is the shrine itself. There is a verandah with a central hall called *mandapa* with an open space in front, and in the centre is the platform where the snake deities are enshrined. There are two images here, one of Nag Raj with five heads and the other of a serpent with only one head. This is the inner sanctuary where only the priest enters. In Manarsalil temple a virgin priestess conducts the most sacred rites and is considered to be the guardian of the serpents.

A similar position pertains among the Meitheis of Manipur, where a priestess looks after the serpent god called Pak-hangba.[5] Near the verandah is a sacred well from which water is drawn as offering to the deities and is afterwards distributed to the devotees as holy water. It is believed that only pious people can see the snakes in the forest and the wicked cannot. The devotee considers himself blessed if he is able to catch a glimpse of the snake while on his way to the temple.

The common private snake shrine in Travancore lies within the compound of the house, often near the boundary, and away from the main building, in order to best preserve its sanctity and to avoid accidental pollution by inadvertent trespass by some members of the family. The abode of the snake god is called *sarpa kavu*, and this is usually a raised patch of land surrounded by bushes and trees. In the foliage there must be a plant yielding milky sap and in the absence of such a plant, one is planted near the shrine. The trees near the shrine are never cut and the area in the vicinity of the *sarpa kavu* is kept very clean. Often granite images of many-headed snakes with spreading

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hoods are placed in the shrine, and no insect or rat or other animal is killed in the consecrated spot. Even broken bits of snake images are worshipped and they are set up in a row. No image or snake-stone is permitted to fall down, as that is considered to be inauspicious. On the inner surface of the hood of the snake is carved a seated female figure.

These sacred snakes are supposed to be different from the ordinary serpents. They are given the status of benign family deities and are presumed to possess strange powers and the attribute of gods. They are revered and they deign to live only under ceremonially pure conditions and surroundings, accepting only vegetarian offerings and abhorring animal sacrifice. In contrast mention may be made of the Thlen of the Khasis which demands human blood as offering. In the event however of their abode being polluted, e. g., by a menstruating woman, the serpents are angered, and unless propitiated may cause disease or harm to the offender. The sacred serpent called *sarpam* is supposed to be small, about 6 to 18 inches in length and is golden in colour. It is highly poisonous but ordinarily does not do any harm. If properly propitiated it guards the family and brings good luck and prosperity; but if neglected, insulted, or otherwise uncared for, it causes skin disease, leprosy or loss of sight. Such a punishment is visited on the offender or on his near relatives. As a consequence certain taboos are attached to the shrines and no menstruating or pregnant woman may come within six yards of the shrine, nor should anyone enter it without taking a bath.

The actual worship or *puja* is conducted either once or twice a year. The priest cooks rice in milk and adds pieces of ripe plantain to it, with a few flowering heads of the sacred *tulsi* plant dropped in towards the end. The offering is cooked on a special oven near the *sarpa kavu* in a bell-metal vessel. Thereafter, the priest pours some water over the snake idols to ceremonially bathe them and places a bunch of areca-nut palm in efflorescence on the head of the image in a diagonal fashion. The idol is then anointed with turmeric powder and basil leaves and flower petals are

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of particular importance is the ritual conducted in the case of barren women who seek divine intercession of the serpent gods. The afflicted couple come on a Sunday morning to the snake temple after a purificatory bath and after putting on new garments. They request the priest to conduct a propitiatory *puja* and offer flour to the deity. Thereafter, a bronze plate on which the name of the person is carved is placed inverted at a spot. After a year when they have been blessed with a child, they repair to the temple once more to offer thanks for the boon granted. The child is helped to lift the bronze plate and under it a small serpent is observed signifying that all is well. In the event of there being no snake underneath, it is taken as a bad omen predicting the death of the child. If even after ten years no child is born to the couple, the unretrieved bronze plate is discarded, on the presumption that the deity has not seen fit to grant the wishes of the devotees.

There is also a class of pious people who have through their devotion to, and worship of, the snake deity, acquired the art of curing victims of snake-bite. They are called *sarpa vaidyas* and cases of snake-bite are brought to them for treatment. The man chants certain magical formulae and tears a betel leaf in front of a pot of milk. The serpent is supposed to come out of hiding and to withdraw the venom, thus effecting a gradual cure.

But modern trends are contrariwise, and a gradual decline is discernible in the ritual of snake worship in a large majority of households which have snake shrines. Less emphasis is paid to the traditional worship of the serpent, and what little propitiation is done is more or less symbolic. Makeshift arrangements are often made, and worship by proxy is offered by the priest, in the absence of the family members, who merely pay a fixed sum to the priest for his labours, and thereby absolve themselves of the guilt of neglecting the snake gods.

Apart from simplification of the ritual of snake worship, yet another symptom of the decay of the cult appears to be the reduced importance that is given to the upkeep of the existing snake shrines. Many erstwhile sacred shrines are in a dilapidated condition. Perhaps in future, snake worship itself might become a thing of the past.

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1 Tod : *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, 86.

2 Wilson & Maclagan : *Glossary of Tribes and Castes of Punjab & N. W. F. P.*, 149.

3 Gurdon : *The Khasis*, 98-102.

4 Dubois & Beauchamps : *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, 641.

5 Hodson : *The Naithais*, 110.

the mouth of this pot with a piece of new cloth, and, all following the eldest who carries it, proceed to the nearest river (it must be running water), which receives the remains of the dead. The men then bathe and return home. In some parts of Malabar the bones are collected on the seventh day, but it is not orthodox to do so. Better by far than taking the remains to the nearest river is it to take them to some specially sacred place, Benares, Gâya, Ramêsvaram, or even to some place of sanctity much nearer home, as to Tirunelli in Wynâd, and there dispose of them in the same manner. The bones or ashes of any one having been taken to Gâya and there deposited in the river, the survivors of the Taravâd have no need to continue the annual ceremony for that person. This is called " Ashtagâya Shraddham." It puts an end to the need for all earthly ceremonial. It is believed that the collection and careful disposal of the ashes of the dead gives peace to his spirit, and, what is more important, the pacified spirit will not thereafter injure the living members of the Taravâd, cause miscarriage to the women, possess the men (as with an evil spirit), and so on.

Then on the fifteenth day after death is the purificatory ceremony. Until this has been done, any one touched by any member of the Taravâd should bathe before he enters his house or partakes of any food. A man of the Athikkurisi clan officiates. He sprinkles milk oil in which have been put some gingelly seeds (all together) over the persons of those under pollution. This sprinkling and the bath which follows it removes the death pollution. The purifier receives a fixed remuneration for his office on this occasion, as well as when there is a birth in the Taravâd.

In the case of death of a senior member of a Taravâd, well-to-do and reckoned as of some importance, there is the feast called Pinda Atiyantaram on the sixteenth day after death, given to the neighbours and friends. The word neighbours, as used here, does not mean those who live close by, but, owing to the custom of Malabar under which each house is in its own paramba (garden or enclosure) which may be a large one, those of the caste living within a considerable area round about. I am not sure whether in connection with these ceremonies there is mutual assistance in preparation for the funeral; or whether there is any recognized obligation between members of the same amsham, dêsam or tara ; or whether this kind of mutual obligation obtains generally between any Taravâd and those of caste round about, irrespective of [illegible] boundaries,

796 Before
[793] day-break of the first day the ordinary temple priests, a Mûssad, will leave the temple after having swept up and made it clean; and (before day-break also) five Nambûtiris will enter it, bearing with them "Sudhi
796 Kalasam." The Kalasam is on this occasion made of the
778 five products of the cow, *i.e.* (panchagavyam) together
[237] with some water, a few leaves of the banyan tree (Arayâl) and Darbha grass, all in one vessel. Before being brought to the temple, mantrams or magic verses will
[783] have been said over it. The contents of the vessel are sprinkled all about the temple, and a little is put in the well, thus purifying the temple and the well. The Nambûtiris will then perform the usual morning worship, and either immediately after it or very soon afterwards they leave the temple, and the Mûssad, the ordinary priest, returns and resumes his office. The temple belongs
[613] to four Taravâds, and no sooner has it been purified than the Kâranavans of these four Taravâds, virtually the joint-owners of the temple (known as Urâlas) present to the temple servant (known as a Pishârodi) the silver flag of the temple which has been in the custody of one of them since the last festival. The Pishârodi receives it and hoists it in front of the temple (to the east), thus signifying that the festival has begun. While this is being done, emphasis and grandeur is given to the occa-
[201] sion by the firing off of miniature mortars such as are common at all South Indian festivals; and, after the
[411] flag is hoisted, there are hoisted all round the temple small flags of coloured cloth. For the next few days
[788] there is nothing particular to be done beyond the procession morning, noon and night; the image of Bhagavati being carried on an elephant to an orchestra of drums, and cannonade of the little mortars. All those who are present are supposed to be fed from the temple.
796 There is a large crowd. On the morning of the fifth day
564 a man of the washerman (he is also a tailor: Vannân) caste will announce to the neighbours by beat of tom-tom that there will be made a procession of Bhagavati issuing from the gates of the temple and passing round about.
[202] Like all those who are in any way connected with the
[188] temple, this man's office is hereditary and he lives to a small extent on the bounty of the temple, *i.e.*, he holds a
[425] little land on nominal terms from the temple property, in consideration for which he must fulfil certain requirements for the temple as on occasions of festivals. His office also invests him with certain rights in the community. The Vannân has, I believe, immense power

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below the Nâyar is permitted to enter. To the north, south, east, and west, there is a level entrance into this hollow square, and beyond this entrance no man of inferior caste may go. The Pânan receives a certain quantity, about 10 lb. of raw rice for his performance.

In the afternoon a small crowd of Vettuvars come to the temple carrying with them swords, not very dangerous ones, and about ten small baskets made of cocoanut palm leaves, containing salt.* These baskets are carried slung on a pole as before. These men dance and shout in much excitement, cutting their heads with their own swords in their frenzy. Some of them represent devils or some kind of inferior evil spirits, and dance madly, under the influence of these spirits which they represent. Then comes the Arayân as on the previous day with his little procession, and lastly comes the blacksmith with the sword.

It is explained by the Malayalis that the individuals of the various castes who hold the office of tailor, goldsmith and so on to the temple, do so, not for the sake of what they receive from the temple, but in order to mark their position of superiority in their caste. The ceremonial allotted to each also no doubt marks his position in the ladder of caste.

The procession in the evening of this the seventh and last day is a great affair. Eight elephants which kept line beautifully, took part in this when I witnessed it. One of them very handsomely caparisoned had on its back a priest (Mûssad) carrying a sword smothered in garlands of red flowers representing the goddess. Up to this time, when she is represented by a sword, it will be remembered she has been represented by an image. The elephant bearing the priest with the sword is bedizened on the forehead with two golden discs, one on each side of the forehead, and over the centre of the forehead hangs a long golden ornament.† He bears other jewels, and over his back is a large canopy-like red cloth richly wrought. Before the elephant walked a Nâyar carrying in his right hand in front of him a sword of the kind

* The use of salt here is obscure as to the purpose. I remember a case of a Nâyar's house having been plundered, the idol was knocked down and salt was put in the place where it should have stood. The act was looked on as most insulting.

† The discs on the elephant's forehead are common in Malabar in affairs of ceremony. The Mappila poets are very fond of comparing a beautiful girl's breast to these cup-like discs.

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a small lamp or burning wick, and the devil dancer throws a handful towards the house. It then finds its way to the tree to the west under which, on the platform, is now a measure of paddy and a lamp; some Brâhmans* repeat mantrams and the elephant, the priest on his back and the sword in his hand, all three, are supposed to tremble violently. Up to this time the procession has moved leisurely, a very slow march. Now, starting suddenly, it proceeds at a run to the temple where the priest descends quickly from the elephant and is taken inside the temple by the Mûssad priests. He who has been carrying the sword all this time places it on the sill of the door of the room in which it is kept for worship, and prostrates before it. The sword then shakes itself for 15 minutes! until the chief priest stays its agitation by sprinkling on it some tirtam, fluid made sacred by having been used for anointing the image of the goddess. This done, the chief amongst the devil dancers will with much internal tumult as well as outward convolutions say, in the way of oracle, whether the Dêvi has been pleased with the festival in her honour, or not. As he pronounces this oracular utterance he falls in a sort of swoon, and every soul, excepting only the priests and the temple servants, leaves the place as quickly as possible. The sheds which have been erected for temporary habitation around the temple will be quickly demolished, and search will be made round about to make sure that no one remains near while the mystic rite of sacrifice is about to be done. When the whole place has been cleared, the four owners of the temple, the senior members of the Taravâds who stand in the position of owners and who, by the way, have stayed, hand over each a goat with a rope tied round its neck to the chief priest; and as soon as they have done so they too depart. There will remain now in the temple three Mûssads, one drummer (Marayar) and two temple servants: no others. These Mûssads are commonly called Brâhmans though the Nambûtiris do not admit them to be such. The reason for all this secrecy seems to lie in objection to let it be known generally that any sacrifice is done. I was told again and again that there was no such thing. It is a mystic secret. The Mûssad priests repeat mantrams over the goats for an hour as a preliminary to the sacrifice. Then

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* East Coast Brahmans (Pattar) I think: perhaps Mûssads.

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leg, and so on, in the event of his having fulfilment of his desire. The offering is never an adjunct of the prayers; it is always something done for benefit received. The thing to be noted is that a vow is *always* fulfilled; fulfilled as well as the vower can possibly fulfil it; it is never forgotten or overlooked.

> " When the devil was sick the devil a saint would be
> " When the devil was well the devil a saint was he "

is a couplet inapplicable to the Nâyar, or, indeed, to any people in Southern India, where vows, of objects to be given or animals to be sacrified, are treated always with the utmost sacredness even by people who perhaps in no relation of life behave for an hour with common honesty.

A true Malayali festival is that held at Kottiôr, in North Malabar, in the forest at the foot of the Wynâd hills rising 3,000 to 5,000 feet from the sides of the little glade where it is situated. It is held in July during the height of the monsoon rain. The average rainfall at Kottiôr in July is probably 60 inches at least, so the devotees generally get a good ducking. Though it is a festival for high and low these do not mix at Kottiôr. The Nâyars go first, and after a few days, the Nâyars having done, the Tîyans, and so on. A curious feature of it is that people going to attend it are distinctly rowdy, feeling they have a right to abuse in the vilest and filthiest terms everyone they see on the way—perhaps a few days' march; and not only do they abuse to their hearts' content in their exhuberant excitement but they use personal violence to person and property all along the road. They return like lambs.

I have not been able to ascertain with that definiteness which would enable me to offer more than an opinion, the connection between this violence of language and physical force against innocent people who are met *en route*, and the object of worship at Kottiôr, so will leave that part of the subject alone. The other day I visited the Gangamma festival at sacred Tirupati in North Arcot, and observed, together with conduct the most truly religious vows being carried out with the strongest disregard to personal comfort, the use of language truly filthy and obscene *towards the goddess herself!* " Gangamma! You have a—— (using a filthy word for the vagina) as big as a basket." "She is a whore " said another; and each one in the little crowd of votaries, evidently from the same village, as they approached the shrine, tried to out-do the other in insult and vituperation of the goddess to whom they had

796 come to pay their vows for some good done them by her.
782 Obscenities which need not be described were done—these chiefly by people of very low caste let it be said—by people who felt that neither gesture in the dance nor word could be gross enough to express the violence of their feelings. Yet these people, men and women, rolled, or were rolled, for they soon become unconscious, many times round the temple, their arms stretched towards it, their hair, their clothes (scanty enough) and persons generally thick with the dust. A piteous sight. And
796 there were to be seen men carrying over their heads an
782 ornamented wooden canopy, the whole (and no light
785 weight) held up, fastened to the person by the ends of the supports of the canopy, being stuck through the skin of the back and of the chest. Nothing resting on the shoulders or held in the hand. I saw a man who, to fulfil a vow to this goddess who was abused so vilely, had done this every year for over twenty years, and this year handed on performance of the painful vow to his son, a growing lad. The bearers of these canopies danced continuously as if trying to make the points in their flesh as hurtful as possible. So that, together with vituperation of the goddess, there was much veneration, and there is no hesitation in expressing this through bodily discomfort and pain.

796 Content for the present with this example from another part of the Presidency, we will return now to Kottiôr
[346] which I visited in November 1894. One sees a temple of Isvara, there called Perumâl (or Perumâl Iswara) by the people; a low thatched building forming a hollow square, in the centre of which was the shrine which, I was not
[793] permitted to see. There were some Nambûtiri priests who came out and entered into conversation. Their life far away in the forest must be a lonely one. The refreshment which they offered, butter-milk and sugar, was
[574] accepted thankfully. The Nambûtiris, very unsophisticated persons and much wrapped up in their personal sanctity, placed the milk and sugar on the ground, and invited us graciously to partake. A large piece of cocoanut which they threw to my dog was, strange to say, eaten greedily by the beast.

796 The festival is not held at the temple but in the forest
778 about quarter of a mile distant. This spot is deemed extremely sacred and dreadful. There was, however, no objection to myself and my companion visiting it: we were simply begged not to go. There were with us a

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Nâyar and a Kurichchan, and the faces of these men when we proceeded to wade through the little river, knee-deep and about 30 yards wide, in order to reach the sacred spot of the festival, expressed anxious wonder. They dared not accompany us across. No one (excepting, of course, a Muhammadan) would go near the place unless during the few days of the festival when it is safe: at all other times any man going to the place is destroyed instantly. How much this belief has to do with Iswara need not be commented on! Nothing on earth would have persuaded either the Nâyar or the Kurichchin to cross that river. Orpheus proceeding to find his Eurydice, Dante about to enter the Inferno had not embarked on so fearful a journey! About a hundred yards beyond the stream we came upon the sacred spot, a little glade in the forest. Why this uncomfortable place was chosen I know not; in the rains when the festival is held it is usually under water, and the people have to stand in water. In the centre of the glade is a circle of piled up stones, 12 feet in diameter. In the middle of the pile of stones is a rude lingam. By the same token the lingam had been broken and displaced a few days previously by some Mâppilas searching for treasure which they thought was there. *Running east from the circle of the lingam is a long shed, in the middle of which is a long raised platform of brick, used apparently as a place for cooking. Around the lingam there were also thatched sheds in which the people had lodged during the festival. Grass and weeds were growing high, and the sheds were dilapidated and looking as if they had not been used for years; but then the rain in Malabar brings about destructive effects with astonishing rapidity.

Pilgrims going to this festival carry with them offerings of some kind. Tiyans take young cocoanuts. I am not

* The circle of stones is specially interesting. Near the Angadipuram-Manjery road, between Vellila and the ferry is a monolith in the centre of a piled up platform circled with stones, the circle 30 feet in diameter. Apparently one of the many pre-Hindu remains in Malabar. Description of the ancient remains in Malabar, which are specially interesting, must be made later on. Just now let me note that stone circles are common. And I find in my notes the following: "On the hill side just about the Tirunelli temple (North Wynâd forests), where there is a clearing in the forest and the ground is somewhat flat, is a circle of stones 12 feet in diameter, and filled up with earth so as to make a raised platform nearly 2 feet in height: in the centre a small upright stone 10 inches high. To the north-east, three flat upright stones . . . . and a flat place, rudely square about 11 feet from the circle, evidently an old sacred place of some of the jungle folk."

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778 sure what the Nâyars take; perhaps the same. Every one who returns brings with him a swish made of split young leaves of the cocoanut palm.

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781 A shrine to which the Malayalis, Nâyars included, resort is that of Subramania in Palni, in the north-west
782 corner of the Madura district, about a week's march from
[765 the confines of Malabar near Palghat. Not only are vows
302] paid to this shrine, but men, letting their hair grow for a year after their father's death, proceed to have it cut there. The plate shows an ordinary Palni pilgrim. The arrangement which he is carrying is called a kâvadi. There are two kinds of kâvadi: a milk kâvadi (one containing milk in a pot) and a fish kâvadi (one containing fish). The vow may be made in respect of either, each being appropriate to certain circumstances. When the time comes near for the pilgrim to start for Palni he dresses in reddish orange cloths, shoulders his kâvadi and starts out. Together with a man ringing a bell, and perhaps one with a tom-tom, with ashes on his face, he assumes the role of beggar. The well-to-do are inclined to reduce the beggar period to the minimum; but a beggar every votary must be, and as a beggar he goes to Palni in all humbleness and humiliation, and there he fulfils his vow; leaves his kâvadi and his hair and a small sum of money.

Though the individuals about to be noticed were not Nâyars, their cases illustrate very well the religious idea of the Nâyar as expressed under certain circumstances; for between the Nâyars and these there is in this respect little if any differenee. It was at Guruvayûr in November 1895. On a high raised platform under a peepul tree were a number of people under vows, bound for Palni. A boy of 14 had suffered as a child from epilepsy, and seven years ago his father vowed for him (on his behalf) that if he were cured he would make the pilgrimage to Palni. He wore a string of beads round his neck and a like string on his right arm (these were in some way connected with the vow). His head was bent and he sat motionless under his kâvadi, leaning on the bar, which when he carried it rested on his shoulder. He could not go to Palni until it was revealed to him in a dream when he was to start. He had waited for this dream seven years, subsisting on roots (yams, etc.) and milk,—no rice. Now he had had the
[776 long-looked-for dream, and he was about to start. As an instance of the Malayali's ignorance of the Hindu theogony, this youth said he was going to the god "Sri Krishnan" in Palni. It is well known that god there is *not* Krishna.

* [See Plate XI, facing p. 230, Category 116.--Analyst]

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months. The last is the day following Siva râtri, the well-known Hindu festival. As it was told to me "Food is offered to the ghosts" on these occasions; to all ancestors, male and female. Food of any kind except cooked rice is offered.* It is cooked and placed in the middle room on the west side of the house, where are kept small images in gold or silver of the senior members of the Taravâd (in poorer houses, a stone simply is put to represent the deceased), and the door will be shut for about ten minutes, after which the food will be removed and eaten by the house people. Special worship of ancestors is often made at the temples specially sacred, on the new moons which have been specified, especially on the last. The plate depicts the crowd in the bed of the Ponnâni river on the day following Siva râtri. Men and women bathed and put on clean cloths and, when they had done so put a little burning camphor, sandalwood powder and some other little accessories, on a leaf which was floated down the river after a brief prayer. The scene of the picture adjoins the temple at Tirunavâyi, supposed to be the oldest in Malabar.

SERPENT WORSHIP.

Description, such as is here attempted, of the Nâyar's religion is incomplete so far. There remains to say something of serpent worship and to make some allusion to common superstitions. For description of these I would refer the interested reader to a capital little book entitled "Malabar and its Folk" published by Messrs. Natesan & Co., Madras, by Mr. T. K. Gopal Panniker, B.A., himself a Nâyar as his name denotes. With this gentleman's permission I will reproduce here chapter 12 of his book entitled "Serpent Worship in Malabar":—

"Malabar is a country which preserves to this day primitive institutions of a type peculiarly fascinating to the ethnologist. Of the various kinds of primitive worship still practised in the country that of the serpent occupies a prominent place. Here the serpent is deified and offerings of pooja are often made to the reptile. It has got a powerful hold upon the popular imagination. Each household has got its own serpent deity possessing large powers for good as well as for evil. A separate spot is set apart in the house-compound as the abode of these deities. This reserved spot is converted into a small jungle almost circular in

* Bread made of rice flour may be offered.

shape. It is overgrown with trees of various kinds, and shrubs, and sometimes medicinal plants also. In the middle of this quasi-circular shrine images usually made of laterite after specified shapes are arranged in certain established methods and a passage is opened to the seat of these images from outside. This spot is so scrupulously reserved, that not even domestic animals are allowed to stray therein. No trees from the place are to be felled down, nor any plant whatever for that matter with any metal or more particularly iron weapons; for these are unholy things, the introduction alone of which inside the sanctified area, not to say the actual cutting down of the tree, is regarded as exceedingly distasteful to these serpent gods. They are not to be desecrated by the touch or even by the approach of a low-caste man. Once in every year at least poojah offerings are made to these gods through the medium of the Numbûdri priests.

"Periodical ceremonies called Pâmbantullel are performed to propitiate them. These are resorted to only on special occasions for the purpose of averting serious visitations from the family. The ceremony is a long complicated process. Any individual drawn from among the Nairs themselves is capable of acting the part of priests on these occasions. A day is fixed for the opening of the ceremony; and a particular plot of ground in the house yard is cleansed and preserved for the performance of the poojahs incidental to the ceremony. Then on the spot certain square figures are drawn, one inside another, and these are tastefully diversified by the interpolation of circular figures and others inside and about them, based on geometrical principles. A peculiar symmetry is observed in the matter of these figures. The figures used in the drawings are usually of various colours, red, white, black and others. Ordinary rice-flour, then again such flour mixed with a combination of chunnam and turmeric powder, thereby making the flour pure red, and burnt paddy husk are chiefly employed. Then a number of other accessories are also required for the ceremony in the shape of lamps, cocoanuts, eatables of various sorts prepared from paddy and rice and some other cooked things, such as rice, bread made of rice, and others. These are properly arranged in the place and poojah is offered by the priest with the slow recitation of *mantrams*, and some holy songs or ballads in memory of these gods. Then a number of Nair women, with perfect purity and cleanliness of person are seated close to each other in a row or two. These women are to preserve sanctity and purity of their persons by a total abstinence from animal food, intoxicants and anything else of an exciting nature for a prescribed period of time; and it is only after the lapse of this period that they become worthy of being admitted to

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As the subject of serpent-worship is one of fascinating interest, I will add to the preceding extract, which is as interesting as it is accurate, an excerpt from the "Report of the Census of Travancore" for 1891 (the Malayalam year 1066), a book which is perhaps not accessible to many. The shrine which is described therein is in the neighbouring Native State of Travancore, but it is equally representative of one in Malabar:—

"A serpent-kavoo in Travancore. Many places of Hindu worship exist in Travancore under groves locally known as kavoos. There are thousands of these in the country. Lieutenants Ward and Conner estimated their number at 15,000 seventy years ago. This number has, I think, increased since then. These kavoos are all dedicated to minor divinities such as Nàgathans, Nàgarajas, Yekshis, Gandharvas, and Sàstas. Some are of great age and repute and own enormous properties for their maintenance. One of these a well-known sarpa-kavoo in a village 70 miles north of Travancore will be here described. Mythological origin for these sarpa-kavoos is thus stated in the Kéralòlpatti. When Parasuràma's first colonists found Kérala uninhabitable and unimprovable, they abandoned it and returned to their old country. During the time of their absence the Nàgas (serpents) of the lower world, called in popular language Nàgalòkam or Pàtàla, took possession of the newly-reclaimed land and settled there. The colonists returning found that the serpents had usurped their lands, upon which a fight ensued, and Parasuràma arbitrated between his colonists and the Nàgas, wih the result that these latter were to be given a corner of every occupied compound. Thus arose the sarpa kavoos of Malabar which, as I have already described in a previous chapter, is generally at the south-west corner of every Tarvâd garden. And Parasuràma further ordained that the places allotted to the Nàgas were to be left untouched by the knife or the spade, thus enabling the underwood trees and creepers to grow luxuriantly therein. It is to such places that the name of kavoo (or grove) is given. In the kavoo are generally planted several idols of serpents on a stone basement called chittrakoodam, and sometimes a low wall is thrown round to prevent cattle or children trespassing into that space. The propitiation of the serpents is deemed essential for the well-being and prosperity of the householder. Offerings of noorum palum (dough and milk) of cooked rice, lights and songs are

made periodically to the serpent gods in the kavoos. The one I am describing here is one of the most important in Travancore. This is known as Mannārsāla. Once upon a time, so says tradition, a male member of this Illam married a girl of the Vettikkòttu Illam, where the serpents were held in great veneration. The girl's parents being poor could give her nothing in the way of dowry. They, therefore, gave her one of the stone idols of the serpent, of which there were many in their house. This stone idol the girl was counselled to take care of and regularly worship; subsequently it is said the girl became a mother and brought forth a boy and a snake, whereupon the snake-child was located in the underground cellar of the house and brought up. The Illam prospered from that day. The woman and the snake are believed to be the cause of the affluence of the family, and to this day to the surname of the male members of that Illom are added, by way of distinction, the names of the serpent god and that of the female. Thus my informant, the present head of the family, is called Vasaki Sridévi Krishnan Nambyadi. To this gentleman I am indebted for the following further details on the snake-worship at Mannārsāla :—He says the name Mannārsāla means the 'unburnt ground.' This refers to an ancient tradition that when the great Khandavavanam was burnt by Agni, the god of fire, this small oasis was spared on the prayer of the serpents, who were the progeny of the serpent offspring of the lady of this Illam. As the Illam could not well accommodate the large number of the serpents that had multiplied, they were removed to a spot on the south of the house, where a magnificent grove has since been grown. In this spot are stone idols put up for the king and queen of snakes known as Nágarája and Nágayekshi, and for various members of the family which, according to my informant, number about 3,000. There are as many stone images in this grove now. In the cellar of the house, as well as in the grove where the stone images are placed, a solution of noorum palum is offered once a year, that is, on the day following the Sivarátri in the month of Másí. The same kind of offering is made to the Chittrakoodom also. About 12½ Edangalies of dough and milk are mixed together and kept in the cellar. Thereafter the door of the cellar is shut for three days, and lest anybody pry into what passes within the cellar, the women of the household cover the crevices and holes of the door

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by the big cadjan umbrellas of the female inmates of the Illam. On the third day the door is opened, and whatever remains in the vessel of the dough and milk placed there is thrown into a tank as unfit for human use. The mixing up of noorum palum and the performing of the poojahs are done by the eldest female member of the Illam. The noorum palum is made of rice-flour, saffron powder, cow's milk, water of the tender cocoanut, fruit of the Kadali plantain, and ghee. In the Nálukettu of the house, offerings of noorum palum and cooked rice, as well as kuruthi (a red liquid composed of flour, saffron and chunam), take place every Ayilyam (star) day. Every morning the king and queen of serpents are washed, and an offering of fruit and milk is made to them; in the noon offerings of Vellanivedyam (cooked rice) and afterwards of fried grain (malar) follow. During the month of Kartika, a special poojah called navakom and offering of noorum palum are daily observed. On the Sivarátri day, in the month of Másí, the customary five poojahs and navakom are performed, and in the evening of the same day sacrificial offerings to the serpents and kuruti, as stated above, are made, and at the conclusion of the day's poojahs the idols are taken in procession round the temple. On Ayilyam (star) days, in the months of Purattási and Alpasi, all the serpent idols in the grove and the temples therein are taken in procession to the Illam, and offerings of noorum palum, kuruti and cooked rice are made there in propitiation of the serpent gods. The person who carries the idol of the Nágarája is the eldest female member of the Illam, and the procession is conducted with great pomp and rejoicings. According to my informant, the eldest female member of the house, though married, is expected to lead a celibate life when she becomes the oldest female in the family. During the festive days at Mannārsāla, about 5,000 people assemble to worship and propitiate the serpent gods, and their offerings include gold and silver coins, and gold, silver, copper or stone effigies of snakes, grains of all kinds, pepper, salt, saffron, tender cocoanuts, bunches of Kadali plantain, melons, oil, ghee, sandalwood, silk and other pilgrims. On the day previous to the Ayilyam ceremonial, about two or three thousand Brahmans are fed. The annual expense of this institution and worship at Mannārsāla is estimated at about 2,000 rupees. The kâvu has its own paddy fields and gardens, from the revenues of which it is maintained.

778 All the land about it, measuring a mile square, is said to
423 belong to it. This would be enormous property, as the
[635] taluk where this kavoo is situated is one of the richest in Travancore. A trifle is given by the Sircar every year. If more funds are required, the Nambiyadi is expected to meet them from his own private income. The grove and its temples cover an immense oblong space measuring about 16 acres in extent. The inmates of the Illam are
[688] the poojaries of the gods in this grove. It is believed
[825] that whenever the poojah is not performed with the strictest personal purity or care to small details, the serpent gods get offended, which feeling is exhibited by
778 the largest cobras coming out of the grove. It should be
776 remembered that, as a rule, the serpents are not seen out
825 of their holes, though hundreds of them are known to exist in these large groves. When any is seen, especially if a real cobra, the village astrologer is consulted, who readily finds out the cause of the wrath of the serpent gods, and steps are taken immediately to pacify them by propitiatory ceremonies. The people believe in these ceremonies most implicitly. That is not a mere form with them. In a house in North Travancore, where
776 I lived some years, there used to be seen now and again
825 snakes of all kinds, and in answer to my request to the servant of my landlord to keep the kavoo neat, he invariably said, "Please, sir, order some lights and milk to the kavoo," for this man most sincerely believed that this was the only effective way of keeping out the snakes from view. He did not seem to believe that there was any good in keeping the premises neat and clean. It should here be noted that a true Hindu population never pelt at or harm the snakes when they are seen. They are objects of worship. One of our retired officials told me that some years ago, when he was young and new to the place, he was puzzled by some of the parties present at his cutcherry telling him that the 'god was coming.' The crowd made way, and on rising, this official was horrified to see that the god referred to was a live cobra. This village he spoke of, even now abounds with serpents, but strange to say, these reptiles
[231] seldom harm man. They are evidently become domesticated animals, for we seldom hear of snake-bites in that village, though the general belief is that there are more snakes there than rats. The people also seem to be quite at home with them, for they do not get put out when they see these reptiles."

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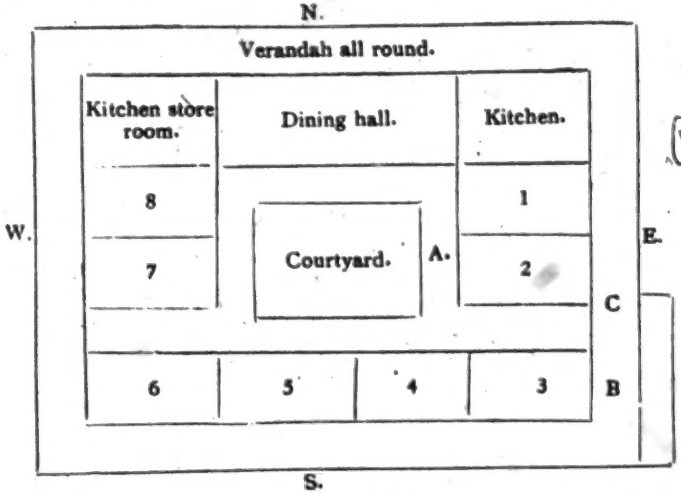
for him by the Tîyan at Uchâl. I recollect a case of murder which arose out of nothing more or less than a Tîyan tenant's refusal to present his Nâyar landlord with a Pâla Ata at Uchâl. I once tried to preserve one of these cakes, but the results were too disastrous for description.*

HABITATIONS.

A house may face east or west; never north or south. As a rule the Nâyar's house faces the east. Every garden is enclosed by a bank, a hedge, or a fencing of some kind, and entrance is to be made at one point only, the east, where there is a gate-house, or, as in the case of of the poorest houses a small portico, or open doorway roofed over. One never walks straight through this; there is always a kind of stile to surmount. It is the same everywhere in Malabar, and not only amongst the Nâyars. The following is a plan of a nâlupura or four-sided house, which may be taken as representative of the houses of the rich:



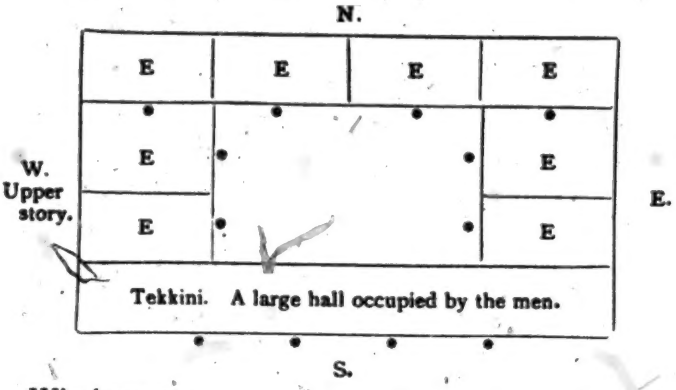
Numbers 6 and 7 are rooms which are used generally for storing grain.

At A is a staircase leading to the room of the upper story occupied by the female members of the family. At B is a staircase to the rooms of the upper story

*For much of the information regarding Uchâl I am indebted to Mr. M. Raman Menon.

occupied by the male members. There is no connection between the portions allotted to the men and that of the women. No. 8 is for the family gods. The Kârnavans and old women of the family are perpetuated in images of gold or silver, or, more commonly, brass. Poor people, who cannot afford to make these images, substitute simply a stone. Offerings are made to these images (or to the stones) at every full moon. The throat of a fowl will be cut outside, and the bird is then taken inside and offered.

The entrance is at C.



Windows at
E. Rooms occupied by women and children.

It may be noticed that the apartment, where the men sleep, has no windows on the side of the house which is occupied by the women. The latter are relatively free from control by the men as to who may visit them. We saw, when speaking of funeral ceremonies, that a house was supposed to have a central courtyard; and of course it has this only when there are four sides to the house. The nâlupura, or four-sided house, is the proper one for in this alone can all ceremonial be observed in orthodox fashion. But it is not the ordinary Nâyar's house that one sees all over Malabar. The ordinary house is, roughly, of the shape here indicated. Invariably, there is an upper story. There are no doors but only a few tiny windows opening to the west. Men sleep in one end, women in the other, each having their own staircase. Around the house there is always shade from many trees and palms. Every house is in its own seclusion.

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partly guided by the influence of the monsoon. In regard to the serpent grove or religious shrine, a square plot just in the middle of the south-west portion is considered the most auspicious. A typical Nayar house is quadrangular, with an open space *(mittam)* in the centre: the western portion of it is the granary, while the rest of it is partitioned into rooms. The northern portion comprises the store-room and the kitchen at the western and the eastern extremities, with the dining room in the middle, while the western and eastern portions are kept as open halls for gatherings on important occasions. The house so constructed must face the rising sun—the east—and yet rather inconsistently it is called the *patinjattupura* or the western roof or building. The reason of this is that the *patinjattu muri*—the central chamber or the honoured guest chamber in the house, sanctuary of the ancestors of its occupants—must be so placed as to admit of entrance through its doorway the sun's earliest rays. Behind one or more of the rooms above mentioned is a *chaippu* forming a kind of enclosed verandah room. Another type most commonly met with consists of a portico serving as a reception-hall, the other portions of the building corresponding in details, more or less, with the quadrangular edifice just described. The rigid adherence to the science of architecture is confined not only to the Nayars and other high caste-men, but also to the generality of the Native Christians and Mahomedans who, before construction, always consult some expert in the choice of a proper site and the formation of a ground plan of the house. Misfortunes or even calamities are often attributed to the violation of these principles, and very often a newly built house is either altered to remedy the defects or even pulled down. There are again houses, where the two types are combined. The huts of the poor classes consist generally of one or two small, dark and ill-ventilated rooms with a kitchen at one end, and a verandah either in front or on all sides of the main building. With the increase of population, and with the demand for more houses, the old notions and *sastraic* injunctions are being overlooked as a matter of necessity, and the old fashioned houses are displaced by those erected on sound sanitary principles. The wood-work of the buildings is solid and substantial, and is in some cases beautifully carved. The walls are generally of laterite, brick or mud, and roofs which till

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The construction of a house on the left or back of a Vishnu 777
temple, on the right of a Siva or Durga temple, or by the right 778
side of a Sastha temple, will cause calamities to the occupants; 823
but that on the opposite side will bring prosperity.

Houses should not be constructed near temples, paddy flats, hermitages, the sea, hills, or cow-shed; if constructed near temples, they should be lower in height than the religious edifices.

Houses, constructed on a dry-land (*paramba*) with an elevation to the north-west, will last for eighteen years; and if on an elevation towards the east, south and south-east, a hundred years; if, however, they are built on a ground with an elevation to the north-east, they will last for a thousand, if to the west, twelve years, and to the north, eight years. Houses built on grounds sloping to the north with *athi* (Ficus racemosa) near them, those sloping to the east with *arayal* (Ficus religiosa) growing thereon, those with an inclination to the west, with Peràl (Ficus Indica) growing thereon, and grounds with *ithi* (Ficus Venosa) are fit for the occupation of the members of the four castes.

The following trees, namely, *elanni* (Mimusops Elangi), 824
or *perdl* (Ficus Indica) growing on the eastern side of a house, 342
athi (Ficus racemosa) or *puli* (Tamarindus Indica) on the 351
southern side, *arayal* (Ficus religiosa), *pala* (Echites scholaris) 823
or milk plant, on the west, *nâga* tree (Trichosanthes anguina) and *ithi* (Ficus Venosa) on the north, will bring prosperity to the occupants. Jack and mango trees cocoanut and areca palms may grow on all sides of a house. *Arayal* (Ficus religiosa) growing on the eastern side of a house will cause it to take fire, while *perdl* on the western side will give cause for fear from enemies. *Athi* on the northern side of the house will bring on abdominal complaints to the occupants. *Arâyal* growing near a house must be cut off, unless the distance between the house and the tree be twice the height of the latter. A cow-shed may be erected either to the [343]
east or the west of the main building; and a similar one to the south of it for bullocks and buffaloes. There are certain ceremonies performed both at the commencement of construction and at its various stages, as well as before the occupation of a house, a detailed description of which will be found in the account of the Brahmans. [1]

1. Chandrika.

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The above two subdivisions are mere titles and the members belonging to them are not numerous in the State.

6. *Mārār.*—The members of this subdivision act as drummers and musicians in temples and also render important services to Brahmans and Kshatriyas in their ceremonies.

7. *Pidamangalam Nayars.*—The members of this clan are engaged in escorting processions in temples. Some also act as sweepers in them. There are not, I am informed, very many in the State belonging to this subdivision.

8. *Pallichán Nayars.*—These are palanquin-bearers of the Brahmans and Kshatriyas.

9. *Vattekád Nayars.*—They are the pressers of oil for use in temples. It has been remarked by some that the Vattékád Nayars are not always admitted to be true Nayars and that in some places they are called Vániyans (oil mongers.) The subdivision is endogamous. There are two minor subdivisions, the members of which neither interdine nor intermarry.

10. *Chempukotti Nayars.*—These are the workers in copper for temples and Brahman houses. The following tradition regarding them is interesting :—

"Chempukottis or Chempóttis (copper tappers) are copper-workers whose traditional business is the roofing of the *srikóvil* or inner shrine of the temple with that metal. They are said to have originally formed part of the *Kammálan* or artisan community. When the great temple of Taliparamba was completed, it was purified on a scale of unprecedented grandeur, no less than thousand Brahmans being employed. What was their dismay when the ceremony was well forward, to see a Chempukotti coming from the *srikóvil*, where he had been putting the finishing touches to the roof! This appeared to involve a re-commencement of the whole tedious and costly ritual; and the Brahmans gave vent to their feelings of despair, when a vision from Heaven re-assured them. And thereafter Chempótties have been raised in the social scale, and are not regarded as a polluting caste." [1]

11. *Otattu Nayars.*—They are the tile and thatch makers for temples and Brahman houses.

12. *Educhéri Nayars.*—They are the makers and sellers of dairy produce.

1. Malabar District Gazetteer, page 120.

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same formality is again gone through. The girl has to sit with her face veiled. After going round the pandal, three, five or seven times, a cutting of the jasmine placed in a brass vessel is carried by the Elayad or family priest, who, mounted on an elephant with it, and accompanied by a grand procession with the beating of drums, a display of fire-works, and the joyous shouts of men and women, goes to the nearest Bhagavathi or other temple, where the plant and the *tâli* (marriage badge) placed in a vessel are consecrated by the performance of a *puja* by the temple priest. The party then return home with it. The night previous to the ceremony is marked by a feast called *Athizham*. Next day, the girl who is again properly dressed and well adorned, is led to the reserved spot or the central chamber in which are placed a lighted brass lamp and a vessel full of rice. A short time before the auspicious hour, she goes round the pandal or shed three times, and is led on by the *Brihmani* to the worship of the Sun (*Adithyane Thozheekal*). In some cases this is done on the bare ground, and in others in a shed provided with a ceiling of plank previously erected for the occasion. After this the girl is seated in front of the shed and somewhat on its western side. The bridegroom or the *tâli* tier, who may be a Thirumulpâd in the case of several girls, is invited and lodged in a house near the bride's family, where he and his friends are treated to a feast called *Ayal* or *Ayini Oonu*. A short time before the auspicious hour, the bridegroom, armed with a sword and neatly dressed, starts in procession with his party to the bride's house, where, at the gate, he is received by a few male members with *ashtamangalyam* in their hands and seated conspicuously in the pandal. In some cases, there is a grand procession from the bride's house to meet the bridegroom's party. A male member of the family, either the maternal uncle or the brother of the bride, washes his feet, and brings the girl, who is already gaily dressed and bedecked with ornaments, into the pandal, round which she goes three times. She is then seated on his left side, and the girl's father makes presents of cloths (*manthrakodi*) in which bride and bridegroom dress themselves, and after the usual distribution of gifts to Brahmans and the Elayad, the latter hands over the *tâli* made by the village goldsmith, at the lucky moment mentioned

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and takes it in his hands. The belief is, that the temperament of the child is determined by that of the person who thus sprinkles the water. All the members of the *tarawád* observes pollution for fifteen days immediately after the delivery, during which period they are prohibited from entering temples and holy places.

First birth-day celebration.

The twenty-seventh day after the childbirth or the first recurring day of the star under which it was born, is an important day, on which the *káranavan* of the family gives to the child a spoonful or two of milk mixed with sugar and slices of plantain fruits reduced to a kind of pulp. Then he names the child calling it in the ear by name, three times. In some places the naming ceremony takes place in the sixth month on the *Chórúnu* day, *i. e.*, on the day of feeding. This is followed by a feast to all friends and relations, the expenses of which are met by the *káranavan* of the *tarawád*. The child is not fed on rice for some time after birth, the practice being to give it the flour of dried plantain boiled with jaggery. There is a particular variety of plantain known as *kunnan* used for this purpose. Well-to-do parents in these days give Mellin's food. The staple food, which is rice, is given to the child for the first time, generally during the sixth month, and is, of course, attended with some ceremony. Necessarily, the astrologer fixes the day, and at the auspicious hour, the child is bathed and adorned (which is the duty of the father), is brought and laid on a plank. A plantain leaf is spread in front of it, and a bright brass lamp is placed near. On the leaf are served a small quantity of cooked rice, generally a portion of the rice offered to some temple divinity, some tamarind, salt, chillies and sugar. Then the *káranavan* or the father ceremoniously sits down facing the child. First he puts into the mouth of the child, a mixture of tamarind, chillies and salt, then some rice, and lastly a little sugar. Thenceforward, the ordinary food of the child is rice. The ceremony is, in some cases, preferably performed in some famous temple, that at Guruvayur being a favourite one for this purpose. A few annas is given to the priest, who gives a small quantity of the food offered to the deity, with which the child is fed.

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belief in animism, and all these are largely mixed up with the religion of the Nayars. Animism refers to the belief that man passes through life surrounded by a ghastly company of powers, elements, and tendencies, impersonal in character, mere shapeless phantoms of which no image can be made and no idea can be formed. Most of these have departments or spheres of influence of their own—one presides over cholera, another over small-pox, yet another over cattle disease, some dwell in rocks, others haunt trees, and others again haunt rivers, whirlpools and waterfalls. All of them require to be diligently propitiated by reason of the ills and calamities which they bring about, and the essence of these practices is magic.

Evidence of a wide-spread belief in the worship of ancestors is to be seen in the kistavens (*thoppi kallús*)—the rock caves containing the sepulchral urns found in the jungles and other parts of the State—in the ceremonies performed and the offerings made for the spirits of the dead. They are worshipped even now in special *kávús*, sometimes even in small out-houses or special rooms in the house on new moon days or *Sankrántis*, and there are also periodical commemorations on the anniversaries of the ancestor's death. Dead ancestors are also represented by stones or small images of gold or silver kept in the middle room of the Nayar houses, and offerings of food and drink are made to them on new moon and *Sankránti* nights. Animistic again is the worship of Káli or Bhagavati who presides over small-pox, cholera, and the thousand maladies that flesh is heir to, the worship of animals and plants and lastly the belief in exorcism and witchcraft in which Brahmans also share.

Serpent worship.

Serpent shrines (*Núgattún kávús* or *Nagakóttas*) are to be found in the compounds of every Nayar house in the Cochin State, and their worship occupies a prominent place in the religious life of the Nayars and other castes. The following mythical origin is ascribed to the adoration of serpents in the Keralólpathi.

The first Aryan colonists settled by Parasurama found Kerala absolutely uninhabitable, and finding it impossible to improve their condition, returned to their old country. After their departure, the Nágas (or serpent gods) of the lower world or *Páthála* took possession of the partly reclaimed land and settled

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773
778 thereon. The early colonists, on a second venture, finding
825 the land occupied, commenced a war against the Nágas, but
776 Parasurama acting as arbitrator, decided in favour of the early colonists, and ordered that they should set apart a corner of every compound as an abode of the serpent gods. He further ordained that these allotted places were to remain virgin-ground, untouched by the blade of the knife or the prong of the fork, while the under-wood and the creepers were to be allowed to grow in wild profusion, and to such the name
778 *kávu* (grove) was given. In it are generally planted several
771 stone idols of serpents placed on a stone-basement called
825 *chitrakúdam*, the whole being held sacred and reserved by a low wall round it to prevent cattle or children straying into
782 that space. The propitiation of serpents is deemed essential
753 to the prosperity and well-being of every house-holder, and periodical offerings are made to them, while the neglect of
776 these is considered to cause leprosy, sterility, or ophthalmia, among the members of the family. These serpents are therefore regarded as tutelary deities of the family, and the gods along with the shrines are conveyed with the property and frequently specified in deeds of transfer.

793 The high priest of the serpent cult is the Pámbu Mékkát
795 Nambuthiri, who lives in a house full of cobras which are said
778 to be harmless to his family. Whenever an image of a serpent
825 from a grove has to be removed from one place to another, he
782 is sent for on the belief that he alone can do it after due propitiation and offerings, and any tree that is cut down for this removal must be sent to the local temple to be used as fuel.
564 The serpent grove should not be polluted by a member of the
841 low caste, or by a woman during her menses; and when it is
783 so polluted or otherwise spoiled, a member of the family of
787 the Nambuthiri priest has to be informed. He gazes into a vessel filled with oil, points out the evil and suggests the remedy.
77[illegible] The ninth asterism in every month is specially selected for
[illegible] snake worship in Nayar families, when offerings of milk and
825 water are made to them. It is said that the approach of a
841 woman during her menses will cause serpents to vacate the
782 grove because of the impurity, and Pulluvans are required to sing songs and perform certain ceremonies to cause them to
532 re-enter the shrines. Images of these serpents are sometimes

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made even of gold or silver and consecrated for worship in Brahman houses. They are also presented to Brahmans by those on whose date of birth an eclipse falls, and this is done to mitigate the wrath of Ráhu.

Cases of snake bite are of frequent occurrence in the northern parts of the State where snakes abound; and nowhere else is the Hindu treatment so skillfully practised as to effect a radical cure by medicines and incantations. When information regarding snake bite isconveyed to a physician, or a bitten man is taken to him, the latter can, by the chirping of a lizard or other tokens, make out the nature of the case and also whether it is curable or not. It is said that physicians should not go to a patient's house, and the following story is given in explanation :—

Once when the emperor Parikshit was ordained to be bitten by the great serpent Takshaka, the latter set out in the disguise of a Brahman. On his way he met another Brahman, who, on enquiry, turned out to be a physician on his way to cure the king. With a view to test his ability, Takshaka bit a tree which was at once reduced to ashes, but the physician removed the poison, and the tree regained its former state. Takshaka, admiring his ability, loaded him with immense wealth and dissuaded him from going to the king. He also made him promise that he should never volunteer his services in such matters unless patients were taken to him. In some families the profession is hereditary, the most prominent among them beingt he families of Kokkára Nambuthiri and Máliyakal Karta.

Tutelary deities.

In every village are to be found guardian deities that protect the villagers from the malevolence of demons which are supposed to occupy an intermediate place between gods and men. The temples of the Nayars in which are enshrined these village deities or *Grámadévatas* are far less imposing than those of the Brahmans and are callad *kávus*. The deities commonly represented are the consort of Siva or some manifestation of that female divinity, and Ayyappan or Sasta; and these are supposed to keep in subjection the demons and spirits which are ever prone to do harm to the people of the village. Thus, though the demons are objects of worship, the propitiation of the guardian deities and the festivals held in their honour are considered to be sufficient to curb

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776 [782] the malignant propensities of those spirits. The most popular of the festivals is the *Mandalam*, which begins on the first of 796 Vrischigam (middle of November) and lasts for forty-one days. 776 In addition to the daily *pújas* to the image of Bhagavati by Brahman priests, special rites and ceremonies (*Kúlamezhuthum Páttum*) are also performed by a particular class of Sudras to the figure of the goddess made on the floor by means of 776 coloured powders, while the devotees sing songs in her praise 796 to the accompaniment of lute-like musical instruments. A [534] man in a fantastic dress with an array of jingling bells round [532] his loins, heavy sounding bell-metal anklets on each foot and a scythe-shaped sword in his hand impersonates the goddess and dances to the sound of tom-toms round the figure of the god- [785] dess Bhadrakáli on the floor. The *Velichapád*, as he is called, [787] becomes highly excited and in his frenzy sometimes even cuts his forehead and causes it to bleed. He speaks, or rather the deity speaks through him, in broken yet commanding tones wholly unlike his own and makes oracular responses to the enquiries addressed to him.

796 On a night in the latter part of the month of Dhanu (early 776 in January), a golden image of the goddess is placed on the back [532] of a big decorated elephant, and, amidst the beating of drums, [788] the firing of pop-guns and crackers, is taken out in procession. [23] The elephant with the goddess is supported on each side by elephants whose numbers vary according to the means of the [791] villagers. The *Velichapád* is indispensable and is accompanied by a group of well-dressed women and girls, each carrying in her hand a plate (*tálam*) full of rice and a light placed on the [782] top of it. The festival ends with a display of fire-works, and the ceremony closes with the sacrifice of goats or fowls. On the same principle but on different lines are celebrated various propitiatory and sacrificial festivals in honour of the other [782] aforesaid deities. Generally, after the harvests, the *Velichapáds* are taken out in procession to the Hindú houses in each village to receive offerings of a measure of paddy and small coins.

776 778 *Sásta* or *Ayyappan*.—According to Keralólpathi, Parasurama with the object of protecting the newly created country (Kérala) is said to have established many temples and dedicated them to this deity. The most important of these is at [788] Sabarimala in the Chengannur Taluk of Travancore, which

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attracts a very large number of pilgrims during the *Mandala púja* from Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. This deity is peculiar to these parts, where he has the largest number of worshippers.[1]

Demon worship.

The worship of the tutelary deities above described is to a very great extent the outcome of a belief in, and a constant fear of, the influence of demons and evil spirits on mankind, a belief which has existed from a very remote period. The worship of demons is confined to the lower orders and has no connection with the higher forms of Hinduism, and yet this belief in demons is so wide-spread that not even the Brahmans are free from it. In every part of the State, in Malabar and in Travancore, magicians and sorcerers, from the highest Nambuthiri to the lowest Parayan, find employment in exorcising their baneful influences. Among the Pánans, Mannáns and Parayans, magic, sorcery, and witchcraft are a hereditary profession, and among the Nambuthiripáds of Kallúr, Káttumatam, and Chennamangalam are to be found special family deities by whose aid they are supposed to avert the actions of demons and spirits. It is curious to note that there are exorcists even among Christians and Mussalmans; and another interesting fact in connection with this is that the high caste Hindus exercise their magic influence by propitiating, by the aid of their sacred *mantrams*, the more refined and sublime manifestations of God, while the low caste-men propitiate Káli in her more hideous aspects. The ordinary people make a distinction between *Bhútas* on the one hand, and *Prétas* and *Pisáchas* on the other. The former are regarded as the messenger of Siva and his consort Sakti, while the latter are the souls of the departed who have died a violent and unnatural death by suicide, murder, or by drowning, and they are believed to be demons who wander about inflicting injury upon mankind in various ways. At noon and at midnight are the chief hours when they attempt to seize or possess those who walk in lonely places or take shelter under tamarind trees or on the sides of tanks. At night the demons are believed to call loudly in order to allure people out of their homes into distant jungles and there to kill them; hence, as a rule, at night a call is not responded to until it is repeated a fourth

1. Vide Religion of the Ishuvans, Vol. I, page 313.

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with the hand which is, in token of veneration, then raised to the head. Milk, curd, ghee, urine and dung are mixed together and used for purificatory ceremonies; and the images of gods are anointed with this holy mixture called *panchagavyam*. Small doses of it are even taken internally, and it is considered an antidote against poison, besides being prescribed as a *prâyaschit* or expiation for offences against caste, whereas the sprinkling of water mixed with dung removes sin or pollution from all persons, places, or things, and purifies them. The bull, the vehicle of Siva, is also held sacred, and a statue of it in granite is either placed in front of the image of Siva or in a separate shrine, and is worshipped as a God. The lizard associated with Siva, the monkey with Hanumán, the Garuda (the brahmany kite) with Vishnu, and the peacock of Subramania are a few of the other animals of Hindu veneration.

Of the birds of ill omen, one species of owl called *pullu* is much dreaded because of the belief that it causes an illness to children which results in emaciation. At the sound of its screeching, children are taken into a room to avoid its injurious gaze. Various are the propitiatory ceremonies performed by specialists to secure its good-will and to prevent its doing harm to babies; and amulets are worn by children as a preventive against its evil influences. Its hideous screeches are always associated with death.

Among trees, some are worshipped while others are used for *pûjas* or sacrifices. Among the former may be mentioned the pipal (Ficus religiosa), a tree which is held in veneration by the Hindus. Persons afflicted with maladies or whose planets are unfavourable, go round a pipal tree, seven, twelve, forty-one, or one hundred and eight times, muttering prayers and burning camphor and other incense at its foot or perchance engage Brahmans to do so, in the belief, that it will cure disease or counteract evil influences. The *vilva* (Ægle marmelos), whose leaf of triple form is supposed to represent the three eyes of Siva, and symbolise his triple function of production, destruction, and re-production, and the *tulsi* (Ocymum sanctum), which is sacred to Vishnu, are also worshipped. In front of every house, generally on the eastern side, or in the central yard of a quadrangular structure, is a stone or mud altar, on which *tulsi* or the *vilva* is planted and watered every day, and is worshipped by the inmates of the house. From

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From the *tulsi* are also made rosaries, which, in addition to being an aid to prayers, are also used as ornaments for the neck. Among the trees used for *pújas* or sacrifices are the sandal-wood, the *pláshu* (Butea frondosa), the *rudrákshaṁ* (Elæocarpus lanceolatus), the *darbha* (Poa cynosuroides), the *karuka* (Agrostis linearis), the *thumba* (Leucas Indica), *chembarutti* (shoeflower, Hibiscus Rosa sinensis), *erikku* (Calotropis gigantea), *thechi* (Chrysanthemum), and the several species of lotus and jessamine; and of these one and all are extensively used for medicinal purposes.

Folk tales.

The belief in demons and the habit of attributing all that cannot be easily accounted for to supernatural powers, have built up an edifice of folk-tales that would prove of great interest to students of folk-lore, some of which are given below:—

The eclipse is ascribed to the devouring of the sun or moon by the huge serpent Ráhu, and while it lasts, a kind of pollution is observed by the people, for during the period of eclipse, food and drink are supposed to acquire poisonous properties.

People who hear stories of Rámáyana, while lying on their beds, will become blades of grass in their next birth.

Will-o'-the-wisps are accounted for, as lights emitted by a kind of precious stone (*mánikka kallu*) from the mouths of serpents, which, owing to their long life, are believed to have acquired the art of flying. Popular belief is that some serpents have been blowing for ages upon gold, embedded in the strata of the earth, and converting it into precious stones of the nature above mentioned. They keep them in their mouths, and acquire the power of flying in the air, with the stones shining brilliantly when they open their mouths.

When the crow and the fowl were first created, they were asked which they preferred, personal beauty or long life. The fowl preferred the former, and the crow the latter. Hence it is that the crow is said to possess a long lease of life.

The crow is supposed to possess only one eye, though apparently it has two. One eye-ball is said to move first in one socket, then into the other as necessity requires. The story is connected with a strange myth.

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prevailed on him to cease his work. The head was therefore transformed into a cocoanut which was henceforth to be one of the most useful of all trees in the vegetable kingdom, and was dedicated to Ganésa, the patron of science and learning.

Funeral customs.

The Nayars generally burn their dead bodies, while those of children under two or three years of age as well as those of persons who have died of small-pox or cholera are buried. When a Nayar is at the point of death, the members of the house-hold and friends who may be present, one by one, pour into his mouth a few drops of Ganges or other holy water or *kanji* water, from a tiny cup made of a leaf or two of the *tulsi* plant. While doing this, they hold in the hand a piece of gold or a gold ring and the water is supposed to touch the gold, before it enters the mouth of the dying person. Sometimes, a *fanam* or gold piece is placed in the mouth, and the lips are closed.

As soon as death has taken place, the corpse is removed from the cot or bed and carried to the *vadakkini*, a room at the northern end of the house, where it is placed on long plantain leaves spread out on the floor, and while it is there, a lamp is kept burning both day and night. One member of the family holds the head in his lap, while another the feet in the same way, and here it is that the neighbours come to have a last look at the dead. All the while, the names of gods or sacred texts are loudly recited in the hope that the soul may quit the world with recollections of God which would serve as a passport to Heaven. Immediately death occurs, the members of the house and the relatives assembled there burst out into loud lamentations, announcing the sad event to the caste-men of the village who attend at once. When preparations for the funeral have been made, the dead body is carried to the *nadumittam* or central yard of the house, or if there is no central yard, to the front yard where it is again laid on plantain leaves. It is then washed, anointed and neatly clothed, and the usual marks of sandal-wood paste and ashes, as in life, are made. The senior member of the deceased's family along with others including the sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, and all the relatives, place new cotton cloths over the dead, and these are used for tying up the corpse before being taken to the cremation ground. Before removal, another ceremony called *Para Nirakkuka* (filling up *para*, a measure thrice the size of a gallon)

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On the third day after the death, all those who are related to the *tarawâd* by matrimonial alliances combine and give a feast to the inmates of the house and to the neighbours. This is called the *Patni kanji*. On the seventh day a return feast is given by the members of the *tarawâd*, to all relations and neighbours. Between the seventh and the fourteenth day after death, no ceremonies are performed, but the members of the family are under pollution, and then on the fourteenth day comes the *Sanchayanam*. It is the disposal of the calcined remains, the ashes of the deceased. The male members of the *tarawâd* go to the place of cremation, and picking up the unburnt bones of the deceased, place them in an earthern pot which is sun-dried—not burnt in the usual way—and cover up the mouth of the pot with a piece of cloth. The eldest carries it and, followed by the rest, proceeds to the nearest river (it must be a running stream) into which it is thrown. In some places the bones are collected on the seventh and preserved in a pot which, when convenient, is carried to Benares, Rameswaram, Gaya, or to Thirunelly in Wynad and there deposited as above described. Such a disposal is called *Ashtagaya-Sradham*, and puts an end to the need of all earthly ceremonies—nor is there any need to continue the annual ceremony for that person. The belief is that the collection and careful disposal of the ashes of the dead gives peace to the departed spirit, which will not thereafter injure the living members of the *tarawâd*.

On the fifteenth day is the purificatory ceremony at which a man of the *Attikurissi* clan officiates as priest. In the morning the members of the family wear cloths washed by a *Vêlan* (washerman) and assemble together for purification by the Nayar priest who throws on them, both before and after bathing, paddy, rice, gingelly seeds, and the holy mixture (milk, oil, etc.). The Elayad or the Brahman priest performs the *Punyâham* or purification of the house, well, etc., and on the sixteenth day he takes the place of the priest. On the evening of the fifteenth day and the morning of the sixteenth, the priests and the villagers are sumptuously fed, and presents of cloth are made to the latter and money to the former. In the Chittur Taluk, the priestly functions are sometimes performed by the Elayad, and *Deeksha* (leaving the body unshaved for forty-one days or a year) is observed by the nephew and the son of the deceased. The one who is under this mark of mourning makes offerings of rice balls

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Fig. 5. A typical Kerala landscape: the red laterite dust road passes between green paddy fields; the blue sky is reflected in the water of the irrigation channel by the side of the road.

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Fig. 6. A Christian shrine at a crossroads in Cochin.

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588 death pollution when her Manavālan dies. The same
[765] Manavālan may tie the tāli on any number of girls, during the same ceremony or at any other time, and he
[793] may be old or young. He is often an elderly holy Brāh-
[564] man, who receives a small present for his services. The girl may remove the tāli, if she likes, after the fourth day.
[184] In some parts of Malabar there is no doubt that the man who performs the rôle of Manavālan is considered to have some right to the girl, but in such case it has been already considered that he is a proper man to enter into sambandham with her."

588 184 Of the tāli-kattu kalyānam in Malabar, the following detailed account, mainly furnished by an Urāli Nāyar of Calicut, is given in the Gazetteer of Malabar. "An auspicious time has to be selected for the purpose, and the preliminary consultation of the astrologer is in itself the occasion of a family gathering. The Manavālan or quasi-bridegroom is chosen at the same time. For the actual kalyānam, two pandals (booths), a small one inside a large one, are erected in front of the padinhātta macchu or central room of the western wing. They are decorated with cloth, garlands, lamps and palm leaves, and the pillars should be of areca palm cut by an Asāri
[778] on Sunday, Monday, or Wednesday. The first day's
[789] ceremonies open with a morning visit to the temple, where the officiating Brāhman pours water sanctified by mantrams (religious formulæ), and the addition of leaves of mango, peepul and darbha, over the girl's head. This
[354] rite is called kalasam maduga. The girl then goes home, and is taken to the macchu, where a hanging lamp with five wicks is lighted. This should be kept alight
[352] during all the days of the kalyānam. The girl sits on a
[824] piece of pala (*Alstonia scholaris*) wood, which is called
[301] a mana. She is elaborately adorned, and some castes

Malabar. "The first regular ceremony performed during pregnancy is known as pulikudi or drinking tamarind, which corresponds to the Pumsavanam of the Brāhmans. But there are other observances of less importance, which commonly, if not invariably, precede this, and may be considered as corresponding to the Garbharakshana (embryo or womb protection) ceremony sometimes performed by Brāhmans, though not one of the obligatory sacraments. Sometimes the pregnant woman is made to consume daily a little ghee (clarified butter), which has been consecrated by a Nambūdiri with appropriate mantrams. Sometimes exorcists of the lower castes, such as Pānans, are called in, and perform a ceremony called Balikkala, in which they draw magic patterns on the ground, into which the girl throws lighted wicks, and sing rude songs to avert from the unborn babe the unwelcome attentions of evil spirits, accompanying them on a small drum called tudi, or with bell-metal cymbals. The ceremony concludes with the sacrifice of a cock, if the woman is badly affected by the singing. The pulikudi is variously performed in the fifth, seventh, or ninth month. An auspicious hour has to be selected by the village astrologer for this as for most ceremonies. A branch of a tamarind tree should be plucked by the pregnant woman's brother, who should go to the tree with a kindi (bell-metal vessel) of water, followed by an Enangatti* carrying a hanging lamp with five wicks (tukkuvilakku), and, before plucking it, perform three pradakshinams round it. In the room in which the ceremony is to be

* An Enangan or Inangan is a man of the same caste and sub-division or marriage group. It is usually translated "kinsman," but is at once wider and narrower in its connotation. My Enangans are all who can marry the same people that I can. An Enangatti is a female member of an Enangan's family.

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613 near the house, round which he makes three pradakshinams, pouring water from a kindi round the foot of the tree as he does so. The procession then returns to the house, and on the way an old woman of the family proclaims the baby's name aloud for the first time in the form of a question, asking it 'Krishnan' (for instance), 'dost thou see the sky?' In some cases, the father simply calls out the name twice.

852 "The Vidyarambham ceremony to celebrate the
871 beginning of the child's education takes place in the fifth
[778] or seventh year. In some places, the child is first taken to the temple, where some water sanctified by mantrams is poured over his head by the Shântikâran (officiating priest). The ceremony at the house is opened by Ganapathi pûja performed by an Ezhuttacchan, or by a
[782] Nambûdri, or another Nâyar. The Ezhuttacchan writes on the child's tongue with a gold fanam (coin) the invocation to Ganapathi (Hari Sri Ganapathayi nama), or sometimes the fifty-one letters of the Malayalam alphabet, and then grasps the middle finger of the child's right hand, and with it traces the same letters in parched rice. He also gives the child an ola (strip of palm leaf) inscribed with them, and receives in return a small fee
[875] in cash. Next the child thrice touches first the
[576] Ezhuttacchan's feet, and then his own forehead with his right hand, in token of that reverent submission to the teacher, which seems to have been the key-note of the old Hindu system of education.

304 "The Kâthukuttu or ear-boring is performed either at the same time as the Pâla-kudi or the Choulam, or at any time in the fifth or seventh year. The operator, who may be any one possessing the necessary skill, pierces first the right and then the left ear with two gold or silver wires brought by the goldsmith, or with karamullu

765 613 524 [783] that, in some parts of Malabar, the visitors bring with them small presents in money or kind to help the Karanavan through the expenditure to which the funeral rites necessarily put him. To hark back a little, it must not be omitted that, on the third day after the death, all those who are related by marriage to the taravâd of the deceased combine, and give a good feast to the inmates of the house and to the neighbours who are invited, one man or woman from each house. The person so invited is expected to come. This feast is called patni karigi. On the seventh day, a return feast will be given by the taravâd of the deceased to all relatives and neighbours. Between the seventh and fourteenth day after death no ceremony is observed, but the members of the taravâd remain under death pollution. On the fourteenth day 764 613 comes the sanchayanam. It is the disposal of the calcined remains; the ashes of the deceased. The male [415] members of the taravâd go to the place of cremation, and, picking up the pieces of unburnt bones which they find there, place these in an earthen pot which has been sun-dried (not burnt by fire in the usual way), cover up the mouth of this pot with a piece of new cloth, and all following the eldest who carries it, proceed to the nearest river (it must be running water), which receives the remains of the dead. The men then bathe, and return [184] home. In some parts of Malabar the bones are collected on the seventh day, but it is not orthodox to do so. Better [778] by far than taking the remains to the nearest river is it to take them to some specially sacred place, Benares, Gaya, Rameswaram, or even to some place of sanctity much nearer home, as to Tirunelli in Wynaad, and there 764 dispose of them in the same manner. The bones or 769 ashes of any one having been taken to Gaya and there 613 deposited in the river, the survivors of the taravâd have

763 184 [778] moments of a dying person are really very trying. All members (male and female), junior to the dying person, pour into his or her mouth drops of Ganges or other holy water or conjee (rice) water in token of their last tribute of regard. Before the person breathes his last, he or she is removed to the bare floor, as it is considered sacrilegious to allow the last breath to escape while lying on the bed, and in a room with a ceiling, which last is supposed to obstruct the free passage of the breath. The names of gods, or sacred texts are loudly dinned into his or her ears, so that the person may quit this world with the recollections of God serving as a passport to heaven. The forehead, breast, and the joints especially are besmeared with holy ashes, so as to prevent the messengers of death from tightly tying those parts when they carry away the person. Soon 764 after the last breath, the dead body is removed to some 184 open place in the house, covered from top to toe with a washed cloth, and deposited on the bare floor with the head towards the south, the region of the God of death. A lighted lamp is placed near the head, and other lights are placed all round the corpse. A mango tree is cut, or other firewood is collected, and a funeral pyre is constructed in the south-eastern corner of a compound or garden known as the corner of Agni, which is always reserved as a cemetery for the burning or burial of the dead. All male members, generally junior, bathe, and, without wiping their head or body, they remove the corpse to the yard in front of the house, and place it on a plantain leaf. It is nominally anointed with oil, and bathed in water. Ashes and sandal are again smeared on the forehead and joints. The old cloth is removed, and the body is covered with a new unwashed cloth or a piece of silk. A little gold or silver, or small coins are put into the

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bangle there by a messenger. An Akattu Charna Nāyar wore an amulet to keep off the spirit of a Brāhman who died by drowning. Another had a silver ring, on which a piece of a bristle from an elephant's tail was arranged."

Tattooing is said by Mr. Subramani Aiyar not to be favoured by North Travancore Nāyars, and to be only practiced by Nāyar women living to the south of Quilon. Certain accounts trace it to the invasion of Travancore by a Moghul Sirdar in 1680 A.D. In modern times it has become rare. The operation is performed by women of the Odda or Kurava caste before a girl reaches the twelfth year.

Concerning the religious worship of the Nāyars, Mr. Subramani Aiyar writes that "Buchanan notes that the proper deity of the Nāyars is Vishnu, though they wear the mark of Siva on their foreheads. By this is merely meant that they pay equal reverence to both Siva and Vishnu, being Smartas converted to the tenets of Saṅkaracharya. Besides worshipping the higher Hindu deities, the Nāyars also manifest their adoration for several minor ones, such as Mātan, Utayam, Yakshi, Chattan, Chantakarnan, Murti, Maruta, and Arukula. Most of these have granite representations, or at least such emblems as a sword or a cane, and are provided with a local habitation. Besides these, persons who have met with accidental death, and girls who have died before their tāli-tying ceremony, are specially worshipped under the designations of Kazhichchavu and Kannichchavu. Magicians are held in some fear, and talismanic amulets are attached to the waist by members of both sexes. Kuttichattan, the mischievous imp of Malabar, is supposed to cause much misery. Various spirits are worshipped on the Tiruvonam day in the month of Avani (August-September), on the Uchcharam or 28th

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event the festival is held yearly to Bhagavati and her followers. The festival lasts for seven days. When I visited it in 1895, the last day was on the 31st of March. Before daybreak of the first day, the ordinary temple priest, a Mūssad, will leave the temple after having swept it and made it clean; and (also before daybreak) five Nambūtiris will enter it, bearing with them sudhi kalasam. The kalasam is on this occasion made of the five products of the cow (panchagavyam), together with some water, a few leaves of the banyan tree, and darbha grass, all in one vessel. Before being brought to the temple, mantrams or magic verses will have been said over it. The contents of the vessel are sprinkled all about the temple, and a little is put in the well, thus purifying the temple and the well. The Nambūtiris will then perform the usual morning worship, and, either immediately after it or very soon afterwards, they leave the temple, and the Mūssad returns and resumes his office. The temple belongs to four taravāds, and no sooner has it been purified than the Kāranavans of these four taravāds, virtually the joint-owners of the temple (known as Urālas) present to the temple servant (Pishārodi) the silver flag of the temple, which has been in the custody of one of them since the last festival. The Pishārodi receives it, and hoists it in front of the temple (to the east), thus signifying that the festival has begun. While this is being done, emphasis and grandeur is given to the occasion by the firing off of miniature mortars such as are common at all South Indian festivals. After the flag is hoisted, there are hoisted all round the temple small flags of coloured cloth. For the next few days there is nothing particular to be done beyond the procession morning, noon, and night; the image of Bhagavati being carried on an elephant to an orchestra

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of them represent devils or some kind of inferior evil spirits, and dance madly under the influence of the spirits which they represent. Then comes the Arayan as on the previous day with his little procession, and lastly comes the blacksmith with the sword. The procession in the evening is a great affair. Eight elephants, which kept line beautifully, took part in it when I witnessed it. One of them, very handsomely caparisoned, had on its back a priest (Mūssad) carrying a sword smothered in garlands of red flowers representing the goddess. The elephant bearing the priest is bedizened on the forehead with two golden discs, one on each side of the forehead, and over the centre of the forehead hangs a long golden ornament. These discs on the elephant's forehead are common in Malabar in affairs of ceremony. The Māppilla poets are very fond of comparing a beautiful girl's breasts to these cup-like discs. The elephant bears other jewels, and over his back is a large canopy-like red cloth richly wrought. Before the elephant walked a Nāyar carrying in his right hand in front of him a sword of the kind called nāndakam smeared with white (probably sandal) paste. To its edge, at intervals of a few inches, are fastened tiny bells, so that, when it is shaken, there is a general jingle. Just before the procession begins, there is something for the Tiyans to do. Four men of this caste having with them pūkalasams (flower kalasams), and five having jannakalasams, run along the west, north, and east sides of the temple outside the enclosure, shouting and making a noise more like the barking of dogs than anything else. The kalasams contain arrack (liquor), which is given to the temple to be used in the ceremonies. Members of certain families only are allowed to perform in this business, and for what they do each

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Two-thirds of it go to the four Tiyans who carried the pūkalasams, and one-third to the five who carried the jannakalasams. Returning to the procession, we find it at the raised platform to the east of the temple. On this platform have been placed already an ordinary bamboo quart-like measure of paddy (unhusked rice), and one of rice, each covered with a plantain leaf. The principal devil-dancer takes a handful of rice and paddy, and flings it all around. The procession then visits in turn the gates of the gardens of the four owners of the temple. At each is a measure of rice and a measure of paddy covered with plantain leaves, with a small lamp or burning wick beside them, and the devil-dancer throws a handful towards the house. The procession then finds its way to a tree to the west, under which, on the platform, is now a measure of paddy and a lamp. Some Brāhmans repeat mantrams, and the elephant, the priest on his back and the sword in his hand, all three are supposed to tremble violently. Up to this time the procession has moved leisurely at a very slow march. Now, starting suddenly, it proceeds at a run to the temple, where the priest descends quickly from the elephant, and is taken inside the temple by the Mūssad priests. He, who has been carrying the sword all this time, places it on the sill of the door of the room in which it is kept for worship, and prostrates before it. The sword then shakes itself for fifteen minutes, until the chief priest stays its agitation by sprinkling on it some tirtam fluid made sacred by having been used for anointing the image of the goddess. This done, the chief amongst the devil-dancers will, with much internal tumult as well as outward convolutions, say in the way of oracle whether the dēvi has been pleased with the festival in her honour, or not. As he pronounces this oracular utterance, he falls

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a silver string as long as the giver is tall. Goldsmiths working in silver and gold are to be seen just outside the gate of the temple, ready to provide at a moment's notice the object any person intends to offer, in case he is not already in possession of his votive offering. The subject of vows can be touched on but incidentally here. A vow is made by one desiring offspring, to have his hand or leg cured, to have an ulcer cured, to fulfil any desire whatsoever, and he decides in solemn affirmation to himself to give a silver image of a child, a silver leg, and so on, in the event of his having fulfilment of his desire.

"A true Malayāli festival is that held at Kottiyūr in North Malabar, in the forest at the foot of the Wynād hills rising 3,000 to 5,000 feet from the sides of the little glade where it is situated. It is held in July during the height of the monsoon rain. Though it is a festival for high and low, these do not mix at Kottiyūr. The Nāyars go first, and after a few days, the Nāyars having done, the Tiyans, and so on. A curious feature of it is that the people going to attend it are distinctly rowdy, feeling that they have a right to abuse in the vilest and filthiest terms everyone they see on the way—perhaps a few days' march. And not only do they abuse to their hearts' content in their exuberant excitement, but they use personal violence to person and property all along the road. They return like lambs. At Kottiyūr one sees a temple of Īsvara, there called Perumāl (or Perumāl Īsvara) by the people, a low thatched building forming a hollow square, in the centre of which is the shrine, which I was not permitted to see. There were some Nambūtiri priests, who came out, and entered into conversation. The festival is not held at the temple, but in the forest about a quarter of a mile distant. This spot is deemed extremely sacred and dreadful. There was,

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however, no objection to myself and my companions visiting it; we were simply begged not to go. There were with us a Nāyar and a Kurichchiyan, and the faces of these men, when we proceeded to wade through the little river, knee-deep and about thirty yards wide, in order to reach the sacred spot, expressed anxious wonder. They dared not acompany us across. No one (excepting, of course, a Muhammadan) would go near the place, unless during the few days of the festival, when it was safe; at all other times any man going to the place is destroyed instantly. Nothing on earth would have persuaded the Nāyar or the Kurichchiyan to cross that river. Orpheus proceeding to find his Eurydice, Dante about to enter the Inferno, had not embarked on so fearful a journey. About a hundred yards beyond the stream, we came upon the sacred spot, a little glade in the forest. In the centre of the glade is a circle of piled up stones, 12 feet in diameter. In the middle of the pile of stones is a rude lingam. Running east from the circle of the lingam is a long shed, in the middle of which is a long raised platform of brick, used apparently as a place for cooking. Around the lingam there were also thatched sheds, in which the people had lodged during the festival. Pilgrims going to this festival carry with them offerings of some kind. Tiyans take young cocoanuts. Every one who returns brings with him a swish made of split young leaves of the cocoanut palm."

Of the Kottiyūr festival, the following account is given in the Gazetteer of Malabar. "The Nambūdiri priests live in a little wayside temple at Kottiyūr, but the true shrine is a quarter of a mile away in the forest across one of the feeder streams of the Valarpattanam river. For eleven months in the year, the scene is

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opprobrium at her house. The chief of the fisherman caste, styled Kūli Muttatta Arayan, has the privilege of being the first to begin the work of polluting the Bhoot or shrine. Into other particulars it is unnecessary to enter. Cocks are slaughtered and sacrificed. The worshipper gets flowers only, and no holy water after paying his vows. Instead of water, he proceeds outside and drinks arrack or toddy, which an attendant Nāyar serves out. All castes are free to go, including Tiyars and low caste people. The temple was originally only a Bhoot or holy tree with a platform. The image in the temple is said to have been introduced only of recent years.' It is a pity Mr. Logan is so reticent. My information is that the headman of the Mukkuvans opens the festival by solemnly making a fæcal deposit on the image. Here again there is the same strange union of everything that is filthy, abusive, foul and irreverent, with every mode of expressing the deepest religious feeling."

Of the cock festival at Cranganore, the following account is given by Mr. T. K. Gopal Panikkar* in his interesting little book on Malabar and its folk. "In the midst of its native charms is situated a temple dedicated to Kali, the goddess who presides over the infectious diseases, cholera and small-pox. She is a virgin goddess, whom no quantity of blood will satisfy. The temple is an old-fashioned one, presenting no striking architectural peculiarities. The priestly classes attached to it are not, as usual, Brāhmins, but a peculiar sect called Adigals, of whom there are but three families in the whole of Malabar. The Brāhmins are purposely excluded from participation in the poojah ceremonies,

* Malabar and its Folk, Madras, 1900.

776
796 lest their extreme sanctity might increase the powers
778 of the goddess to a dangerous extent. Poojahs are
[793] daily offered to her. An annual festival known as the
[784] Bharani, connected with this goddess, plays a most important part in the religious history of Malabar. It comes off in the Malayalam month of Meenam (about
788 March or April). Pilgrimages undertaken to the temple
796 on this occasion are potent enough to safeguard the pilgrims, and their friends and relations, from the perilous attacks of cholera and small-pox. Hence people resort thither annually by thousands from almost all parts of Malabar; and, the more north you go, the stronger will you find the hold which the goddess has
[782] upon the popular imagination. The chief propitiatory offering on the occasion is the sacrifice of cocks. In fact, every family makes a point of undertaking this sacred mission. People arrange to start on it at an auspicious moment, on a fixed day in small isolated bodies. Preparations are made for the journey. Rice, salt, chillies, curry-stuffs, betel leaves and nuts, a little turmeric powder and pepper, and, above all, a number of cocks form an almost complete paraphernalia of the pilgrimage. These are all gathered and preserved in separate bundles inside a large
[293] bag. When the appointed hour comes, they throw this
[481] bag on their shoulders, conceal their money in their girdles, and, with a native-fashioned umbrella in the one hand and a walking-stick in the other, they start, each from his own house, to meet the brother pilgrims at the rendezvous. Here a foreman is selected practically
[533] by common consent. Then commences the vociferous recitation of that series of obscene songs and ballads, which characterises the pilgrimage all along. The foreman it is that opens the ball. He is caught up by others

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342 From the portico, you go direct into a big hall in the middle of which is a big yard paved with granite; this yard is exposed to the sky. On one side of the hall—right or left—are situated two or three rooms, from one of which you are taken to upstairs rooms which are also connected with the portico. On the portico side of the hall are the kitchen, bath-room, and a few more rooms which are utilized for various purposes. In another place of the compound is an outhouse in which Brahmans are asked to perform worship.* Near this house is a tank and a well. The house itself possesses a well near it for the exclusive use of the inmates.

But educated Nayars now-a-days build their houses on different plans.

361 *Preliminary.*—Watakanchery is a Government division, rather than a true village, being marked out merely for convenience of revenue assessment. It stretches from east to west a distance of nearly four miles along the foot of a hill. A water-course which runs from east to west forms the northern boundary; the maximum distance from north to south is nearly a mile and a half. The whole area is 3,692·64 acres (nearly 5½ square miles). It is an area containing a few groups of houses intersected by paddy fields and "parambas," i.e., land on which paddy cultivation is not undertaken.

Watakanchery proper, or the town of Watakanchery, as it is called in the village accounts, is at the easternmost boundary of the Government village area and is the headquarters of the taluk containing all the public offices. Two tracts of land, one inhabited by Mappillas (Muhammadans) and another by Syrian Christians (locally known as Nasranees, i.e., Nazarenes) are included in the "town" of Watakanchery from the contiguous areas of the adjoining Government villages on the north and south respectively. Its area is 1½ square miles.

The Taluk of Talapilli contains 74 such "villages" divided solely for revenue purposes. In the "town" Brahmans live in great numbers, while the lower castes occupy the rest of the village area. This block I shall designate Watakanchery (T) and the whole area Watakanchery (V) in the following.

162 [179] 564 *Population.*—Watakanchery (T) has about 2,000 inhabitants; Watakanchery (V) about 4,000. Watakanchery (T) contains within its limits three religions—Hindus in the centre and Mappillas (Muhammadans) and Christians to the north and south, respectively. Among the Hindus the Brahmans form the majority in the "town," while there are a few "vocational" castes such as barbers, goldsmiths, etc., and a few Nayars. Though the term "castes" is in strictness to be applied to Hindus alone the Mappillas and Christians are regarded as two other castes. The Mappillas and the Christians cannot touch the Hindu caste-people without polluting them, while there are castes within the Hindu fold itself, such as carpenters, goldsmiths, masons, Cherumas (vide below), Eluvas, etc., who are [113] kept at a distance of a specified number of feet by the higher castes. There is a full and interesting study of the tribes and castes in Mr. L. K. Anandakrishna Iyer's "Cochin Tribes and Castes." The Hindus however form the majority.

[778] *[In Nayar houses, I am informed by Mr. L. K. Anandakrishna Iyer, this shrine is sacred to the cobra, to whom worship must be given by a Nambudri Brahman, as otherwise the Nayars are bitten. This belief may be the cause of the subjection imposed on Nayars by Nambudris, particularly in relation to Nayar women.—Ed.]

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566 [462] work connected with the harvesting, separating the paddy from the stalks, etc. They are employed as a rule throughout the year by their masters; in leisure days however they are paid a little less than the stated wage.

[262] They take kanji (rice boiled in water) and toddy in the morning, toddy in the afternoon, cooked rice at night; they eat also fish and flesh. They behave well, are obedient and honest and loyal to their masters, very earnest about their work, but are completely illiterate. There are no schools for them in the village.

[778] [796] They worship spirits in the shape of stocks and stones; and on the occasion of the festivals of their Gods and Goddesses they take a good dose of toddy and with drums and bugles and priests dance in the premises of the 'temple'.

564 There are sub-divisions among the Pulayas, Cherumas, Paraiyas, Nayadis, Malayas and others, who form separate castes among themselves and are restricted in their intercourse with one another.

[361] The Cherumas dwell in colonies of two or three families each, in low, small thatched huts near the land of their masters. It must be admitted that they are not treated properly by the high caste Hindus, though they form the backbone of agricultural labour in these parts. They are low paid and underfed and treated with contempt and sometimes with harshness by the other castes and their masters. It is a wonder that they still cherish obedience to their masters and earnestness in their work. There are a few who try to get rid of the yoke by running away, but the majority are contented and stay with their masters. They are experts in practical agricultural work and can face any sort of weather.

311 *Land and Occupation of land—*

	ACRES.
Area of wet lands	653·24
„ dry lands	937·21
„ lands watered by wells	...
„ common waste	18·81
Pasture other than common waste	33·94
Woods and forests	1,912·35
Fruit trees and scattered shade trees ...	301·48

312 There are altogether five public tanks in the village, most of which are not used for irrigation purposes at all, but for bathing, which is done by all at least once a day. There are no public wells. The cultivation of rice solely depends on the rains of the South-West Monsoon (June—September) which are copious, and of the North-East Monsoon in November. Every house however contains a well, from which water is drawn for drinking purposes and for watering the compound gardens in the summer. Water can be obtained at a very slight depth in most parts except at the foot of the hills. The sides of the tanks, usually not very large in size, are paved step by step with granite or laterite stones by which people can step down into the water for bathing. Water is lifted from the wells by means of pots for drinking purposes, but for watering gardens lifts of various sorts are used.

406 The water wheel, which costs about Rs. 35, is very rarely used except in *kol* fields where water has to be lifted out of the land.